

6 Essentials of Apostolic Truth

This is Part 1 in a two-part series.

There has been much said in recent years regarding the office of apostle and how an apostle should function. Even mainline evangelical leaders are using the term “apostolic” to describe certain types of leaders. Consequently, I feel the need to put together a brief summary of what I want to call “apostolic truth,” which is a fancy way of saying what apostolic understanding should include, in my opinion.

To me, apostolic truth is not mere doctrine or concept but is mainly built upon practical experience and action. Apostolic truth that does not involve high risk, accomplishment and action is not truly apostolic.

The following are what I believe are some of the essential principles of apostolic truth.

1. Apostolic truth involves personal and ministerial transparency with high-stress capacity and endurance.

In 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, Paul the apostle makes a defense of his apostleship based on his ability to endure hardship. He says apostles are given a death sentence (1 Cor. 4:9); because of the enormous responsibility they have to represent Christ, they are continually targets of persecution and criticism.

We also read in 2 Corinthians 12:5-11 that Paul was transparent and actually bragged about his weaknesses so the power of Christ could rest upon him. (This is unlike the preachers today who only brag about their faith and their accomplishments.)

Yet of myself I will not boast, except in my weaknesses. For if I desire to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But now I resist, lest anyone should think of me above that which he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me, lest I be exalted above measure. I asked the Lord three times that this thing might depart from me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, in reproaches, in hardships, in persecutions, and in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. I have become a fool in boasting. You have compelled me, for I ought to have been commended by you, for I am in no way inferior to the leading apostles, though I am nothing (2 Cor. 12:5-11).

Apostolic theology includes the ability to function intelligently and spiritually in the midst of a high-stress environment.

Second Corinthians 11:23-33 says:

Are they servants of Christ? I speak as a fool. I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brothers; in weariness and painfulness, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, and in cold and nakedness. Beside the

external things, the care of all the churches pressures me daily. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led into sin, and I am not distressed?

If I must boast, I will boast of the things which concern my weakness. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forevermore, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor under King Aretas secured the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me. But I was let down by the wall through a window in a basket and escaped his hands (2 Cor. 11:23-33).

Also in Acts 27, we see that Paul the apostle remained calm and gave spiritual guidance to his captors while on the ship that crash-landed in Malta, resulting in a revival in Malta.

Apostolic ability is not based on comfort or circumstances but thrives in any environment, as we see Paul's worship in the Philippian jail, which causes an earthquake and releases the prisoners (Acts 16).

2. Apostolic truth involves a deep understanding of the Scriptures and biblical truth.

In the early church, we find that the people sat under the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42). The apostolic mandate includes having a deep understanding of the Scriptures and essential biblical truth as well as church history, resulting in an ability to discern and correct biblical error before it leads to apostasy. (For example, the book of Galatians and book of Hebrews were written by an apostle to correct heresy.)

Apostolic doctrine is a balance between grace, holiness and truth, exalts the Lord Jesus above all and is local church-centric. Unfortunately, there are numerous reports of so-called apostolic leaders and/or movements that have embraced various extreme doctrines, which is due to leaders not being properly grounded biblically and historically. (Presently

there is an extreme hyper-grace movement, an unbalanced prosperity gospel, extreme kingdom theology and also liberation theology movements, to name only a few.)

3. Apostolic truth cannot be separated from a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus.

The original 12 apostles all walked personally with Jesus, and the apostle Paul encountered Jesus personally while on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Paul also seemed to indicate that seeing Jesus was one of the things necessary to prove his apostleship: "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet indeed I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:1-2).

Due to the enormous weight of responsibility for the churches and regions assigned to him, an apostle needs to be a person of prayer and continually aware of the presence and person of Christ to sustain him and enable him to walk in love and wisdom through numerous challenges they will face. If not, apostles will quickly make bad decisions and act in the flesh due to the enormous pressure constantly upon their lives.

Furthermore, their identity needs to be firmly rooted in Christ and not in their vast accomplishments, or else they will minister out of a need to impress others and not for the glory of Christ. They walk with Christ and worship Him even in the midst of great persecution and pressure. Apostolic ability is not based on comfort or circumstances but thrives in any environment.

4. Apostolic truth involves being strategic in planning and purpose.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 Paul says:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to

the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

The word for “war” in verse three is the word “strategy.” Thus, Paul is saying that he is a divine strategist who, as a general in the body of Christ, leads the armies of God to conquer enemy territory and present it back to the Lord Jesus.

One of the main characteristics I have observed in true apostolic leadership is the acute ability to solve problems, to take complex issues and simplify them, and then to be able to map out a plan for strategic implementation. It is not enough to have a vision; you need to have the ability to strategically implement the vision or it will be merely a dream.

5. Apostolic truth includes reformation, not just revival.

The apostolic mandate is not about escaping the earth but engaging culture with a goal of equipping the saints to care for cities and nations. Thus, apostolic theology teaches that an overseer of a key church should shepherd their community, not just their flock.

The apostolic not only deals with redeeming individual sinners but also influences the systems and social structures of communities, cities and nations. While revival brings people into the church, reformation has to do with sending the people out of the church into the world to reflect God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Thus, apostolic truth exists to fulfill the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and equip the saints to go into every sphere of society for kingdom influence and purpose.

In Ephesians 4:10-12, we also see the purpose of fivefold

ministry is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, which is to fill up the earth realm with kingdom influence under the lordship of Christ.

6. Apostolic truth involves galvanizing unity in the church for a purpose.

Apostolic truth is not merely ecumenical; that is to say, it does not strive merely for pastoral unity for the sake of unity, but it is based on a cause and purpose. Apostolic leaders will not waste time having unity that does not result in fulfilling kingdom purpose and destiny. They are not interested in pastors holding hands and fellowshiping with every so-called Christian and denomination and/or interfaith gatherings that do not result in expanding the influence of the kingdom in society. They will unite with like-minded churches and leaders to fulfill a certain mission in their cities and nations.

The apostle Paul started churches in at least 30 of the most influential cities in the Roman Empire. Each of those churches started other churches until there was developed a complex apostolic network that was the impetus for world evangelization. {eoa}

Joseph Mattera *is launching a new apostolic institute! Check out or text APOSTLE to 345345 for more information.*