

Too Many Apostolic Leaders Are Falling for This Typical Charismatic Structure

In the context of this teaching, when I say the word “charismatic,” I am not being negative about the Pentecostal experiences of moving in the gifts of the spirit. I am referring to a typical charismatic structure related to the culture, governance and methodologies that pervades many of the churches in the world that are considered part of the apostolic movement.

Most people in the apostolic movement only understand the fivefold ministry individualistically. However, it is possible to have an individual (functional) apostle leading a church with a prophetic, evangelistic or pastoral wineskin. However, unless the structure is apostolic you will not produce apostolic fruit.

Jesus said, follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men. The key phrase here, “to become,” implies a process. This is much different from the contemporary church model which is event driven. Jesus expects our churches to be process driven which has to do with teaching, accountability, small groups and doing life together. This passage also shows the need for another person to speak into a disciple in the context of community for them to have spiritual formation.

Jesus called his followers disciples, which has to do with sitting under another person as a student in the context of community. These disciples are the only ones serious enough to warrant a person to invest their time in them. Paul instructed his protege Timothy the attitudinal and capacity criteria for selecting a potential disciple to invest in:

2 Timothy 2:1-7 says:

So you, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Share the things that you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses with faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Endure hard times as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No soldier on active duty entangles himself with civilian affairs, that he may please the enlisting officer. Anyone who competes as an athlete is not rewarded without competing legally. The farmer who labors should be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I am saying, and may the Lord grant you understanding in all things (2 Tim. 2:1-7).

Discipleship is tough. Disciples have to have the attitude and diligence of a soldier, athlete and a hardworking farmer. They also have to be faithful, capable and able to communicate the gospel clearly to others.

The Progression From Believing to Being Disciples

The sermon the apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost shows that those who received his word and were saved weren't yet called disciples.

Acts 2:41 says, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

Acts 2:47 says, "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

Acts 5:14 says, "Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, crowds of both men and women."

Note, Luke, the author of the book of Acts, did not refer to any of the believers as "disciples" up until this point. It seems as though they weren't using the word disciples until

Acts 6:7, when the leadership team was increased, “So the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples grew rapidly in Jerusalem, and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

How did they go from being a mere “believer” to becoming a disciple?

Acts 2:42 illustrates that in order to be a disciple, they had to submit to a pattern of living and teaching, “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.” Hence, they did not just attract crowds but submitted to them a process whereby they can become committed disciples of the Lord. Jesus built the church on disciples—the apostles did the same.

We even see the pattern of Paul the apostle when he went into a new territory, he either looked for disciples and/or made disciples. Paul did not initially set out to plant churches but to plant the gospel by making disciples!

Acts 19:1 says, “While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples.”

Acts 14:21-23, 28 illustrates Paul’s methodology:

When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the minds of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, to go through many afflictions and thus enter the kingdom of God. When they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed ... And there they stayed a long time with the disciples” (Acts 14:21-23, 28).

Truly, the focus of the book of Acts is on disciple making—not

planning huge events or planting churches. If the goal is to merely plant a church, then you will just desire to gather a crowd and build big buildings. If the goal is to make disciples, you will create a Jesus community that will become a significant church because its culture is based on discipline, love, service and mission.

If you are interested in the subject of discipleship, order Joseph Mattera's latest book, *The Jesus Principles*, available on Amazon.