

Prayer and Equipping

Apostles today!

Contents

- Introduction
- A Biblical understanding of apostolic ministry
- The call to apostolic ministry
- Apostolic priority (The preaching of the Gospel)
- The church on mission (The apostolic for every believer)
- Practical preparation for trans-local ministry

This course is designed to encourage and spur on those who have a desire to fulfill their God given call in Christ who was faithful to God who appointed him. *"Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him" (Hebrews 13 v 1-2 ESV)*

Luke reveals the mission of Christ here on earth. *"For the Son of man came to seek and save the lost". (Luke 19 v 10 ESV)*

It is to this end that we will look into the apostolic gift. We will look at its implication for the church today and the necessity for a biblically robust revelation of the call, purpose and anointing of an apostle today.

My desire is not so much to convince you of the need for apostles in our day nor is it to academically prove the continuation of the apostolic anointing upon specific men. This, I will assume is a settled matter. I do however believe that the biblical evidence studied in this course will partly answer these questions.

We who have resolved to look into this matter must keep in mind the Inerrancy *of the scriptures and the importance of not stretching the texts beyond what they reveal to us on the subject.

**the inerrancy of scripture means that scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.*

A biblical understanding of apostolic ministry.

• A definition of apostles/apostolic gifting.

Apostle derived from the Greek word, *apostolos: one sent forth* and *apostole: apostleship/a sending forth*. From this we get the broad understanding that apostolic ministry concerns itself with going or being sent forth for a specific task or mission.

(2 Cor 8 v 23) The word messenger (apostle) is used in the context of those being sent, this includes Titus. Also in (Phil 2 v 25) with regard to Epaphroditus.

Messenger (apostle) is used of those men who had a specific task to do in the church that they were sent to.

Paul uses apostle to refer to himself and his co-workers in (1 Thess 2 v 6-7) Luke does the same referring to both Paul & Barnabas (Act 14 v 14).

There seems to be a distinction between the 'office of an Apostle and the gift of an apostle'. Or at least this is what I gather from scripture. This excludes deranged false-apostles, super-apostles, self-named and self-appointed apostles.

To qualify for the office of an Apostle one had to have been a witness to the risen Christ, (1 Cor 9 v 1-2, 1 Cor 15 v 5 & 7-9), called and commissioned by Him. (Mark 3 v 14-15; Matt 10 v 1-4, Acts 1 v 25, 9 v 4-6 & 15-16) In addition to this they were also workers of signs and wonders. (2 Cor 12 v 12)

There were other men who were not of the twelve who operated in an apostolic anointing. Paul & Barnabas (Acts 14 v 14; Gal 2 v 9); Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16 v 7); Silas and Timothy (1 Thess 1 v 6 and 2 v 6) Apollos (1 Cor 4 v 6 & 9); James the brother of Jesus (Gal 1 v 19)

This helps us understand that apostles today differ from the twelve Apostles and a few others who were commissioned by Jesus, who had seen the resurrected Christ, and who had authority to write scripture.

Though there are many who would disagree that those men who have an apostolic gifting, anointing and authority have disappeared with the first century. We believe that God is at work restoring a fuller revelation of the continuation of this gift to the church along with other vital gifts, given for the good of the church and for the advance of the Gospel of the God's kingdom here on earth.

Apostolic ministry entailed that these men travel from time to time, evangelizing and establishing churches in many cities and nations, from which they could effectively reach people in crucial centers of trade, commerce and culture.

Their chief concern was to reach all peoples in every known city & nation with the gospel.

Gordon Fee says it well, "This ministry was largely understood as an Itinerant ministry/traveling from place to place. This included prophets and evangelists and yet not exclusively. Itinerant workers founded churches by evangelizing and built them up through prophetic utterances.

There can be little question that this is the understanding of the term 'apostle' in Paul's letters." (1Cor 9 v 1-2; 2Cor 10 v 15-18 & Rom 15 v 17-20)"

(G.Fee:707) GEP

(Eph 4 v 11-16) Gives us a clear picture of what this gift along with others does for the church that belongs to Jesus.

The apostolic gift is given to the church, along with other key ministries to:

- Equip the saints for ministry
- Build up the body of Christ
- Maturing the church into the fullness of Christ
- So that they will no longer be children but sound in doctrine
- In order to grow up in every way into him who is the head, Christ
- Joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped
- As each part works properly
- Built up in love

In (1 Cor 12 v 28) Paul lists the apostle first in a whole bunch of other gifts and ministries this was not to say that this was the greatest gift but it was first in terms of its benefit to the body. The apostle was understood to be vital for the growth and health of the early church. (Eph 2 v 17-22)

• **The call to apostolic ministry.**

This gift is a leadership gift and is in continuing need today for the strengthening of churches and the establishment of new churches. This gift should be looked for in regional directors, church planters, and denominational leaders. (1 Corinthians 12 v 28; Ephesians 2 v 20 & 4 v 11)

The call of God to apostolic ministry must be clear. Scripture reveals time and time again the necessity of a clear call to this weighty work. Paul understood this and walked in the reality of this call. (Rom 1 v 1-5, Gal 1 v 1 & 15, Eph 1v1, Col 1v1)

I believe that the gift of an apostle and the call to church plant go hand in hand. (Acts 11 v 19-26) This is not to say that all who have planted have had an apostolic anointing and calling, rather those who have planted successfully can attribute it to this specific gift.

I would also dare to go as far as saying that, those who have planted and failed would benefit from asking whether they truly are called to apostolic ministry.

These men are called to be missionaries, movement leaders, they have the gift of administration, preaching and teaching. They have a special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ which enables them to assume and exercise helpful leadership over a number of churches in spiritual matters which is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by those churches.

They are required to gather people, they put in a new foundation for a church. A successful church planter makes a new wineskin one that is able to hold the new wine that God desires to pour out on the church. This is done through the power of the Spirit, it is done theologically through proclamation and exposition of scripture, it is done practically through time spent modeling a Christ-centered, gospel-centered life. (Acts 17 v 1-5 & 1 Thess 1 v 2-10)

Has God called you to apostolic ministry?

We need to ask God to clarify and confirm this call upon our lives.

A calling is not a job, the call of God consumes your whole life, your job is something you do efficiently and clock off once you're done. God's call keeps you up at night and wakes you up in the morning. It's a lifestyle. Your call is tested financially, in marriage, spiritually and personally.

Paul's hardships are a prime model for us (2 Cor 11 v 16-33)

No one I know after receiving beatings and hardships such as these returns to their office job for more! But a called man will.

Apostolic priority (The preaching of the Gospel).

It is hard to get away from the fact that one of the most primary tasks of apostolic ministry is the proclamation and exposition of the scriptures especially the gospel message. (Matt 24 v 14, Acts 4 v 33, Rom 1 v 1-6)

- Christ centered (life, death & resurrection)

All five of the ministries in (Eph 4 v 11) are related to the proclamation and exposition of the gospel. The texts in Paul are not thinking of offices but of functions in the church both universally and locally. These apostolic men would travel from city to city, from one nation to another proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and planting churches.

- Apostolic Partnerships.

1Cor 1v 1(Paul's inclusion of Sosthenes demonstrates Paul's concept joint partnership in apostolic ministry)
C.G.Kruse 1 Corinthians NBC IVP

2 Cor 1v1 Paul and Timothy apostolic partnership.

The Church on mission.

The apostolic for every believer.

(Acts 1 v 8) "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

(Matt 28 v 18-20) "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The church was designed in it's very nature as an organism strategically placed in the world to radically infect it's host.

What we will look at now will help us to understand the role that we as Christians play in the world that we live in. We will look at how the church needs to take the gospel and contextualise it for the different cultures and sub-cultures in it's immediate spheres of influence.

What we need to ask is whether we are on mission effectively enough in our own community and city? We will look at three key things for the effectiveness of apostolic ministry/missions, the gospel, the culture and the church.

First of all the gospel message is of prime importance, it is the good-news of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners.(1 Cor 15 v 1-8)

- It is the distilled essence of the scriptures.
- It is the means that God uses to bring redemption to a lost world.
- It is both a message and a life lived out by Christians not just in the church but in the community and city that they find themselves in.

By being faithful to the gospel message the church is enabled to engage culture in a redemptive way.

Secondly culture is the behaviour and beliefs that characterise a particular social, ethnic or age specific group of people in a said area.

- Social culture includes (performing arts and theatre goers, manicured metrosexual men, blue bellied biltong eating Blue Bulls fans)
- Ethnical culture (Jews, Gentiles, Afrikaners and Zulu's)
- Age specific culture includes (Justin Beiber fans, Andre Rieu fans and 60 year old purple haired Steve Hofmeyer groupies).

The challenge for the church is not just to be relevant to these various cultural contexts but the ability to take the gospel without watering it down or compromising it but rather, to effectively translate, integrate and communicate it to the various cultures in it's given area of influence in a redemptive way.

Thirdly the church community is the loving and secure context in which transformation can take place in the lives of both believers and un-believers. The church is called to faithfully engage those in the culture with the gospel, to disciple and train new believers for works of service in the church and community.

We are called to the gospel (loving God), the culture (loving our neighbour) and the church (loving our brother).

My desire it that we would begin to learn how to read our community, work-place and those strategic area's of influence that God has placed us in and see a new kind of missionary emerge who has a revelation of the mission field on our door step.

Practical preparation for trans-local ministry

1 Corinthians 9:16-27

“For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the Law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

Many people might think to themselves: ‘I can’t preach or teach, so the apostolic is not for me.’ This is incorrect! In order for the apostolic gift to be effective into the nations, it requires teams of servant-hearted men and women, who ALSO want to see the gospel preached, and churches planted; they just have different gifts and skills. These men and women are vital to the success of outreaches and church plants – they enable the preachers and teachers of the Word to do their ‘job’ more effectively. “The preacher’s got to eat too!”

Team

Being able to work in team on an outreach is vital.

Identify a team leader before departing on the outreach.

Also identify specific gifts/talents/strengths for specific tasks, for example: Cooking, cleaning, putting up tents, physical labour, car mechanic, etc.

- a) Unity on the team

1 Pet. 3:8-12

- b) Flexibility

Be ready and prepared to play ‘out of position’.

You may be asked to clean toilets or lead a meeting, when you were originally asked to cook.

Adapt to every situation, joyfully.

Allow God to stretch you, and increase your capacity!

Culture Shock

For most people, the minute they step foot in another country (especially a poor nation), they ask themselves 'What am I doing here?!'

Responding to the call to "go" will often take you to places that will make you extremely uncomfortable. There is nothing easy about leaving the comforts of home to go to a place that is foreign to you.

We use an analogy of a toothpaste tube being squeezed: Is it toothpaste that comes out, or something else?!

When you're on mission, your 'toothpaste tube' will be squeezed, and often it's not toothpaste that comes out! How you respond in difficult and uncomfortable situations is important.

Romans 5:3-5

"More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Communicate with your spouse or another team member about how you're feeling.

Journal the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in your heart.

Self-control is important, don't be ruled by your emotions.

Being Hosted Well

- Respect the culture – you are not there to 'westernize' the people, you're simply there to preach the Gospel to the lost.
- Be a blessing to those who are hosting you - here are some suggestions:
 - Groceries
 - Offer to help fix something in their home (take basic tools with)
 - Finances
- Don't make unrealistic promises (like build a church or make a financial commitment)
- Don't be fussy – about what you eat, or your accommodation
- Take the time to get to know your host family well, and build real friendships

Plan

'Fail to plan, plan to fail!'

Budget

-Ensure all costs are included: petrol, food, accommodation, etc.

-Make provision for any unforeseen costs / emergencies.

Food

-Prepare a meal plan beforehand, divide the cost, stick to the meal plan!

-For the road (don't forget the return trip!)

-For each day OR for your host family

-Pack food wisely (especially if you need to take perishables like meat)

-Label each container correctly to avoid searching through every box to find something (this can also ensure that border-crossings go smoother)

-Bottled water!

Equipment

-Create a checklist to ensure you don't forget anything

-Include a basic vehicle maintenance kit & first aid kit

Paperwork

-Passports!

-Ensure that you know which documents are required for each border crossing before departing!

References

- Gordon Fee, God's Empowering Presence, Hendrickson publishers
- C.G.Kruse, 1 Corinthians, NBC IVP
- Mark Driscoll, Radical-Reformation, Zondervan
- All scripture is taken from the ESV bible (Crossway)