

STUDY ON APOSTLESHIP

I want to talk a little bit about my own journey in trying to understand the subjects that God told us to cover. The 1st thing I'd like to say is that I am not here to stand front of you as an expert or someone who is preaching the word of God with authority on you, but rather as someone who has been and still is, in the process of a journey of learning God's will and studying the Bible.

I think there are 2 things that almost everyone says and they should be careful about saying these things in my opinion. Number 1 is that the things they do are led by God and number 2 is that the things they do come from the Bible. I think that the maturity a Christian should seek is to understand that we try to hear from God and try to do what God tells us to do through prayer and through our understanding but we fall short all the time, and we do not follow His will perfectly and we make mistakes. The same goes for understanding the Bible. I believe the Bible is a perfect book it's the perfect will of God, His covenant with humanity, but let me be the 1st in line to say that I do not comprehend every single thing that's in the Bible! However, that doesn't mean I'm not trying to understand what's in the Bible and hopefully growing in knowledge every day.

I sincerely hope that this is the position that you can take as well as a fellow believer and citizen of God's kingdom.

So that makes me a student, someone who is in the process of learning and understanding God's will and understanding what the Bible tells us on how we should work and operate together. In fact just to mention this briefly but I think the major mistake in Christianity is that we have accepted and we very readily accept a static repetitive plan of operating as if it is "perfect", as if we have

found the perfect will of God and need not make any changes to our practices. I found that one of the keys to understanding the Bible and understanding the will of God is to try to continually be open to learn and to actively seek new revelation and to not put oneself into a repetitive pattern with preordained definitions and functions.

I think that most Christians seek new doctrinal revelation, but perhaps do not realize that they are at the same time accepting a static practice of their Christian walk, particularly with regard to how they function with other believers. We seem to want new doctrine, but are extremely fearful of new practice. What I am mainly speaking of in this study is about Christian practice. I am by no means questioning anyone's beliefs or sincerity. The truth is that my experience with almost every Christian I have ever encountered (and there have been many over the years) I have found to be a kind, loving, and good individual. Moreover I see the talents, the abilities in all my brothers and sisters in the Lord, the great and powerful anointing that are upon their lives. But I have found these gifts to be hindered in so many ways, to be trapped in traditions and practices that were not at all thought up by the people themselves.

Over many years I've tried to study 3 subjects from the Bible: ministry, authority, and the operational principles of the New Testament church. My first encouragement to you is to hope that you too will study these subjects with an open mind and spirit.

To be very brief, ministry means to serve, to serve God and to serve others and ministry gifts are something that God has given everyone. They are very very important because the purpose of the ministry gifts that all of us have been given is to witness the Gospel and to spread the Gospel. God has given specific gifts to everyone, in order to accomplish His purpose of spreading the Gospel--to get people saved. So these gifts of ministry are

extremely important and it's quite clear that the more of them there are the better. The more people who do ministry the better for God, and the better for His purpose, the Gospel. It really just makes common sense, and in fact is very simple really. (unfortunately there's an awful lot that we need to unlearn about ministry to really grasp ahold of and function in that kind of simplicity that Bible speaking of!).

As far as authority goes, Jesus quite clearly said that we believers should not exercise authority one over another among ourselves (Matthew 20:25-27, Mark 10:42-45 Luke 22:25-29). This seems a simple principle and many people just think it has to do with how good or bad a church leader is--they relegate this idea to a judgement, when in fact it is a practice. How easily we see to relegate Jesus' teachings into the traditional system of Christian practice. I believe there is a very powerful understand in putting these 2 concepts together.

Think of a scenario in which a group of believers are together, and they are convinced that no one of them ought to have authority over one another (they ought to be equals) and that they all should minister. Imagine this group striving as much as possible to have and keep Christ as their Head in all things. Imagine that they would then pray together and fully accept and try the words of function they receive through prayer and the gifts of the Holy Spirit--knowing that the highest function ought to be the witnessing of the gospel. Imagine being together with other believers and simply trying to find out God's will on how and where and when and who ought to be sent out to sow the Word of God. Imagine that they consider the ministry actions of Jesus in the Bible as their highest example to strive toward--following His example of praying for the sick, helping the poor and needy, helping the homeless and praying for those who need deliverance. Imagine the Gospel purpose as the central part of the meeting, often inviting in those who are unsaved or in need or ill, so that

most of the time the group is praying for and supplying others needs--utilizing just what they have--not worrying about building physical structures in the earth but rather constantly seeking God's spiritual kingdom, His rulership, by spreading His love.

The only question I have is why must I imagine this when it just ought to be so!

In studying these principles of ministry and authority that the Bible teaches, what I realize (and it has taken many years to do so) is that what I've been describing and understanding is what the Bible would call apostleship. In other words the concept of everyone being in ministry, and of not exercising authority one over another among yourselves (that is to say to function together as a group of equals) is a description of apostleship.

So when Jesus was speaking of these principles and when the Bible tells us about ministry in all, when Jesus talks about not exercising authority He is describing apostleship. Now let's add in an understanding of how the new testament church functioned. The Bible tells us that Christians should meet frequently, usually in small groups, (only occasionally assembling all the Church together in one place). In these meetings everyone can speak, and teach, and pray, and prophesy. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit should be utilized as God leads, and all the gifts of ministry should be encouraged. So everyone is in ministry to God, and everyone has an equal say in things and God can speak through whomever He chooses. The highest purpose is the Gospel. People ought to be frequently sent outward from the meetings for Gospel witnessing (specifically as God leads--in other words many different forms of Gospel witnessing). Those who are unlearned and the sick and needy, ought to be invited into meetings frequently (so they can be ministered to!).

So in describing how the New Testament church met, we can see

that those principles of everyone in ministry and not exercising authority but being equals fit right into the way the church works in the description of the church meetings in the Bible. These principles also fit into the ministry actions of Jesus as described in the Gospels. I will say this again but I believe the new testament Church was simply doing their best to follow the example that they had seen Jesus do. They were imperfectly following His perfect example. I don't see any reason why we cannot do this too folks!

Again what I'm describing is apostleship and it took me a long time to really understand that because as someone who had been to church and experienced Christianity in many traditional ways I had it very strongly in my mind that the purpose of Christianity is to meet with other Christians. But that is not the sole purpose of Christianity.

The purpose of Christian meeting is to further the Gospel.

If we look at the Bible example and doctrine with regard to meeting, you see that these are not very strict rules at all, but rather simple parameters that make common sense to the purpose of spreading the Gospel. Almost any kind of meeting can fit into those parameters. Jesus did different things with different people at different times. Why? I believe it was because He had a perfect understanding of the needs of people. He changed what He did and said based upon the people He was ministering to. He was interested in meeting their needs, therefore He did and said the right things that they needed to hear, He healed where there was faith and brought deliverance and help to those in need. His ministry was based on need, certainly not on a repetitive pattern of meeting. And I believe the people in the Bible who followed Him were in fact doing the same thing as best they could. Imperfectly following His perfect example.

However it's very easy to fall outside of the parameters the Bible

gives about ministry and authority. It's very easy to not allow or encourage or give the opportunity for everyone to minister and it's very easy to let one person exercise authority continually in a meeting. There are specific examples in the Bible of Christians making these mistakes. For example when Jesus told the apostles not to exercise authority one over another, they had previously asked Him to be placed in positions of authority in His kingdom. They had asked 'hey Jesus can we sit on your right-hand and left-hand when you come in glory?-- We want to be in power with you we want to be in authority with you.' And He was shook his Head and said 'no that's not the way things are supposed to work! That's not the apostleship that I've been trying to demonstrate to you.'--"I am among you as one who serves"

Tradition has given us a very strong bias that says that meeting is more important than witnessing. Tradition has told us that the "final position" of a believer is to be a church-goer--a paying member of a specific group. In the new covenant the final position of every believer was to be a minister, a servant of God that focuses their time and effort and resources on furthering the Gospel.

This bias often causes Christian groups to see the witnessing of the Gospel and apostleship as a failure, since the end result they are looking for is a church goer--a tithe-paying member. The truth is that witnessing the Gospel brings persecution and rejection along with success. The parable of the sower shows us that most Gospel witnessing will not produce good fruit--and yet there is a good result anywhere we sow the Word of God. But it is a good result for God--for God's kingdom--and not necessarily a result that fits our bias.

When we see meeting as being the "end goal", Gospel witnessing can be seen as a failure. We are looking for a tangible, physical

result, whereas God is looking for a Spiritual result, a saved soul....the building of His invisible kingdom.

Traditional church practice is based on the old covenant, so it is as if we are trying to make people be practitioners of both the old and new covenant. We want people to believe the new covenant yet at the same time to define who they are, and how they will practice their Christianity by old covenant rules. We legalize the Bible, turning it into a set of numbered laws, rather than seeing it as a whole example of God's love and the highest example of Christian practice.

So in uncovering these principles of ministry in all, and functioning together as equals, meeting in multiple ways in which everyone can minister and everyone is equal and the highest purpose was the Gospel, I have come to believe that the Bible is describing apostleship.

The word apostle is used quite a few hundred times in the New Testament. It comes in different forms (the Greek apostello is often translated as the word "sent"). We see the word apostle in the Bible, given to certain people, and through tradition it may seem to be a title of authority. We need to understand the Bible was interpreted by people who were already doing church services and had long ago walked away from apostleship so that when they look at the Bible they gave people the title of apostle because they were sure that an apostle was someone who had authority over others within the church. That is exactly what apostleship is not. The word apostle means to be sent with a message. Of course the message that we are to carry is the Gospel so all of us are to be sent with this message of God's love and salvation. In the book of John chapter 17 Jesus prays a prayer in which He prays that all of His followers will be sent. What does that mean? Again it's just verification and understanding that everyone is in ministry our highest purpose is to be working

together in furthering the gospel.

Our meetings should be Gospel witnessing meetings in which everyone is allowed to speak, pray, teach, but the purpose of all these ministries is to receive God's instruction on how to further the Gospel. It is very unfortunate that tradition leads good Christians to meet in a way in which the Gospel is omitted. And the purpose of meeting quickly becomes....meeting.

A little more about authority.....

Jesus did the will of the Father in Heaven. He did the perfect will of the Father. Jesus demonstrated perfect ministry, and perfect authority and perfect apostleship (I am sure you would all agree!). Some people might question what I'm saying when I say that we should not exercise authority one over another. Perhaps it suggests anarchy among believers, but we must understand that there is an authority over Christians.....God. There is meant to be an absolute Authority in the Christian church.....there is meant to only be room for God to rule. And He is quite capable of leading a hundred or a thousand or a billion believers all at the same time. Perhaps we ought to put Him to the test, instead of presuming that a pre-ordained meeting in which one person is in authority is the way that God needs us to meet.

“But we need to have a pastor....we need to have a bishop...a pope.....an elder.....a whatever!” Whenever I mention this idea of striving to not exercise authority one over another, those are the arguments I hear. I will tell you this plainly, to the degree that we believe in our heart that another human being is to be in authority over a group of Christian believers is the degree to which we have kicked God out of the picture. There is to be only one Potentate (1 Timothy 6:15), one Head, one authority. And as much as it might sound sensible and safe and “Biblical” to have a pastor/bishop/elder/whatever to be in charge, by simply making

this choice in our hearts we are, to that degree, usurping God's right to have absolute authority among us.

Jesus as a man in the earth functioned under the authority of the Father so there is an example that He sets for us. There is an Authority, there is a Ruler, there is a King.... there is someone who is meant to give instruction and leading and whose instructions we are supposed to follow but He's not here.... He's not physically present. Therefore we ought to function together as equals, as brothers and sisters.

After Jesus was resurrected and appeared to His disciples, He said "all authority has been granted unto me". Now He is the Head of the Church. Christ resurrected -- now seated at the right hand of God the Father, the position of authority and power and He is meant to lead all things in the church (Ephesians 1:22, 5:23, Colosians 1:18, 1Timothy 6:15).

So again it's quite simple. We need to meet in ways in which we have not decided what to do ahead of time, and who will lead, but rather to meet in ways in which we are to find what Christ the Head wants us to do, knowing and understanding that His will and highest purpose is to carry the Gospel.

I want to talk about apostleship in terms that help us understand it better and see it operating today in our lives and experience.....

Sometimes when I talk about these principles people tend to believe that I'm creating a method of meeting, but that's not at all the case. I believe when we're studying and trying to understand apostleship we are attempting to understand how God Himself works. It's interesting because I rarely ever hear anyone try to understand how God works and how we could line ourselves up to be in His will to a greater degree.

I believe God works through apostleship. What do I mean by that?

I believe almost all of us get saved through apostleship.

If apostleship is God sending people with the Gospel to sow the word of God into people who have not heard the word of God and have not accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. Then that is how He works. It is how Jesus worked in the New Testament and that as how the church in the New Testament was working.

Another very simple truth that took me many years to understand - the New Testament church was simply imitating what Jesus did. They were simply imitating what they saw Jesus do. Jesus worked in a small group and He got together and followed the will of the Father and went to many different places by the Father's command. He was sent (again that word apostle---"to be sent") frequently to the sick, to the needy, to the poor, to people who needed deliverance. In Luke chapter 4 verse 18 and 19 we see the purposes of the gospel that Jesus spells out at the beginning of His earthly ministry.... to help the poor and the needy to pray for the sick to pray for people who need deliverance, to spread the gospel of salvation which is eternal life through faith in Christ

So in the Bible, God works through apostleship. I believe He's the same today (Hebrews 13:8) I believe He works through apostleship today. Unfortunately most Christians are disconnected from the true apostleship that God needs done. I believe the greatest mistake in traditional Christianity is this disconnection with the true apostleship that is the way that God works.

Okay here's how to understand apostleship in your life. Think about how you got saved. How you came to the point where you accepted Christ.....

Most of us will remember that day and the moment when we said

'yes I repent of my sin and I believe that Jesus is God and I believe that His blood washes away my sin'. We tend to think of that moment as our salvation but the Bible calls this a harvest. Before that harvest came, God sent people to you, to sow the word into you. I can almost guarantee it and I can almost guarantee that if you think back you'll think of 2 or 3 or maybe 10 or 20 people who were Christians, who came to you and lead you to that point.

Most often the sowing of the Word comes not just from one person, usually it's a small group of people.

Those people may have told you about your sin, and the need to repent. They may have demonstrated the love of God to you and showed you how much God loves you by helping you. Those people may have prayed for you or just dropped some Scriptures to you or encouraged you to think about God in a new way. That group of people who witnessed to you before you came to accept Christ may have just helped you physically or emotionally. They may have just been around you or showed you an example and you saw that they had a different life than you did. They had a life in God, they had a relationship with God. They had something different than you had.

Think about it, God sent people to you and that was God's apostleship to get you saved. The word apostle simply means someone who is sent with a message. It certainly was and important message for you!

Let me describe the apostles who came to me..... I accepted Christ when I was in my 20's but I can think back to when I was probably about 14 or 15 years old. I was watching a football game with my dad and someone held up a sign at the football game that said 'John 3:16'. I saw it enough times that I got irritated and I opened up the Bible one day and read what it says in John 3:16. I read that God so loved the world that he sent His Son that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.. Now I didn't fall

down on my face and accept Christ at that moment but something was spiritually sown in me that day. Something was planted in me, the word of God was sown into me by those people--even though I did not meet them personally. God had told them to hold up a sign of a football game that may have been 1000 miles away from where I was, but it worked! Gospel ministry could take on almost any different kind of form as it is led by God. Gospel ministry can take on any kind of function because it is sent by God to the specific needs He sees.

Apostleship is what puts the message out there. The seed is sown by those who are sent. Read the parable of the sower. I like to call it the parable of the sloppy sower because that fellow plants seed all over the place! On the road, and among thorns, and on poor soil. Once in a while a seed falls into good soil. so that I can thank God that a sown seed fell into good soil on that particular day when I saw 'John 3:16'.

Now I could think of someone else who I consider one of the apostles that God sent to me..... A few years later I had a boss where I worked who was a Christian. If I may tell you he was one of most irritating people I ever met my life! I worked in the produce department in a supermarket and he was the manager and if I may tell you this he was one of the sloppiest people I ever met in my life! He used to leave a mess for me to clean up every night! I had to work extra hard to mop the floors and clean up the mess that he left me and he would leave me tons of work and I thought this man was lazy and sloppy! Other managers had not been like him. But you know what, he used to always say to me "you need to get born again--you need to get born again". I heard it so many times, I got irritated by what I heard. Even though this guy was not my favorite person in the world he told me that I needed to get born again and many years later when I heard the message I said you know, even though he was sloppy, even though he was not the greatest boss in the world, he was right!

The Bible says the word of God always accomplishes its purpose and that's why we need to sow the word of God even though we are not perfect people even though we are not perfect shining examples of God even though we are not walking on water and performing perfect miracles even though everything doesn't go perfectly we are supposed to continually sow the word of God just as we are. In fact I think God needs more sloppy, irritating Christians to keep telling people that they need to get born-again. I honestly do think there are far too many Christians who believe they have to attend church for decades and become some kind of perfect person before they're ever allowed to serve God.

I can think of probably 4 or 5 other people who at various times demonstrated the love of God toward me in a Christian way. When I put that all together, to me it spells apostleship. I see the hand of God that reached out to me and plucked me from hell which I consider the most important thing that has ever happened to me and I'm sure that you consider that the most important thing that ever happened to you too. Thank God for those people. Thank God for being in those people and releasing the free gift of eternal life so generously.

So do we see what apostleship is? Do you see how it is God's will, working through Christians who are sent by Him with the Gospel to sow the word and to demonstrate His great love and to spread his Gospel? Do you see how it works-- in a small group, and how it works through the real authority of God which is people being directly instructed and led through Christ's will, through the leading of the Holy Spirit through the will of the Father to reach others who have not heard the Gospel. And do you see that it's all about people being in ministry? The real true ministry which is service to the will of God and service toward others.

The man who was my manager who was sloppy and lazy and didn't care very much about me in some ways, I consider one of the greatest ministers I've ever met in my life because he just kept telling me I needed to get born-again. I believe the real definition of what ministry is, is not someone who is perfect, but someone who is serving God, not someone who exercises authority over others, but someone who is exercising his authority over the devil, over sickness, over Satan, over sin (Luke 9:1-2). These are the places the Bible tells us to exercise our authority, our power in God. These people were led by God specifically toward my need, and we can see it was a small group which He sent. They didn't know one another, (although some of them actually may have in the spirit) they were led by God to bring the Gospel to me, and God's plan worked. Apostleship works!

I think that many Christians would agree with my definition and understanding of apostleship there is a common understanding of this but usually it's called witnessing and there's nothing wrong with the word witnessing but it tends to keep people from understanding that they are truly in ministry when there are doing these things and it also tends to say that that's not really the most important ministry even though people in church might say that it is the most important ministry to go witness the gospel. If it is the most important ministry my question is why aren't we funding it why aren't we organizing it why aren't we connected with it? Or are we saying one thing and doing another?

You see if anyone reads and studies the new testament it is painfully clear that Gospel witnessing is of central importance in Christian function. But how much more difficult it is to see that we may be teaching one thing and practicing something else. We can teach gospel witnessing and at the same time be practicing a Christian function that excludes any opportunity for people to work together as witnesses!

Christians are not connected with this apostleship. And that really is a question that I have worked hard to find answers to. Jesus was quite clearly connected with apostleship. The first priority of His earthly ministry was to find apostles. If we look at the New Testament church and attempt to describe how they worked, apostleship would be the answer. From the very beginning those who met in the upper room received the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and immediately 3000 people were baptized. Salvation followed their meetings through the function of apostleship. The Bible tells us those people went and witnessed "the wonderful works of God" to the people who were nearby, and 3000 were baptized in one day (Acts 2).

The point of it all is that it's not organization and repetition. Rather it is to meet to receive the empowerment and authority of God so that we can go outward with the Gospel. Now I think that many Christian churches believe that and want that to happen but the fact is that between us today and Jesus's ministry and the ministry of the church in the Bible, there are many years. And in this vast time, people have purposefully disconnected Christians from apostleship. And would it not be a prime goal of our enemy Satan to attempt to disconnect believers from God's highest function?

The connection between authority and history....

I think that when many people read the areas of scripture in which Jesus asked us to not exercise authority one over another among ourselves they tend to think that this means we should not accept "evil" leadership. That we have a right to turn away from leaders who are mean, or greedy--and yes this is true of course. But I believe the greater false authority within Christian practice comes from history. In other words the authority that I am mainly speaking about consists of lots of very very nice, well intentioned Christians of today, who are unknowingly following the rules and functions of ancient authority. My argument is not hardly at all with the

messages that come from the pulpits of today, my argument is with the pulpit itself. I look at most Christian groups and see that they quite often teach the new covenant and certainly believe in it--however do they realize they are practicing a set of rules based on the old covenant which were initiated by ancient authorities from the Dark Ages?

It's not what is taught in churches that I disagree with, rather it is the "amen" that I question. Where is the Biblical authority of the never-ending amen which is found in most Christian groups? Who said that only one person can speak, teach, minister and the rest can only say "yes"? Those are the accepted authorities that I see and question. Traditional practice leads us to be unknowingly disconnected with the new covenant that we so rightly believe in.

History

Most of these disconnections come from the 4th century and the decisions of the Roman Empire. Understanding history is something that I think is vital for Christians to study. The Bible record ends at about the end of the first century. The truth is that the records of the next period of time are somewhat vague and unreliable. But it seems as if generally the churches were following and connected to the practice of apostleship. However, in the 4th century a group of Christians sat down in counsel with the Roman Emperor Constantine and they drastically reformed the church practice. After Constantine's time another Roman Emperor forcibly made everyone a Christian by making this new religion the official Roman practice. Of course that's not how you make Christians. You can't make Christianity a law and say that everyone has to be a Christian! This gives us a big clue as to how far away from the original Biblical truth these Roman leaders had already come.

Christianity was enforced on people as a law for hundreds of years throughout the dark ages. In the 4th century something called the Christian nation was formed. The basis of function now came from the concept (misconception) that everyone was a Christian. What we don't realize is that most Christian churches of today were founded in Christian nations and their traditions of practice are rooted in this idea.

This a very important concept to understand and it I believe explains why Christians are so disconnected with the apostleship that God works by.

Think about the reality of people who formed churches in the last few hundred years....If you were forming a church and everyone around you is a Christian there certainly seems to be no need to witness the gospel. It's really as simple as that. Travel and communication were limited--so what to do? Meet regularly, worship God, teach believers, these functions became the centerpiece of practice. And it then becomes very easy to follow along with the traditions formed in Rome in the 4th century. I once found a comment on this period of time in a Catholic history book. It said that since everyone was now a Christian “new forms of ministry had to be invented-- simple apostleship was no longer needed”. I believe this is the root of error in Christian practice and ministerial function. A new form of ministry was invented because everyone was already a Christian by law. So now the church had to reform or change itself. What did they do?

Basically they emphasized other aspects of Christianity and eliminated the apostleship. They fit the Christian practices of worship and teaching into a pagan format and ritual. They created the church service. The church service has worship and teaching and as I've said many many times worship and teaching are certainly Christian things to do, but we should also realize that worship, and teaching one another, is just for ourselves and it

does not get the gospel done nor is it apostleship. And when these practices are placed in a ritual, very wrong practices of ministry and function emerge over time. The common person becomes disconnected with their own ministry, and sees ministry as a type of authority over them (exactly what Jesus said ministry is not!). We create an authoritarian ministry and the majority believe themselves to be sheep--permanent sheep.

There are many things that are very interesting to study about the history of the Christian church. In particular the events of the 4th century. Some people might question the importance of studying history but as someone once said " those who do not know their own history are destined to repeat it". If viewed with open eyes a study on the history of the church will bear out this saying in many ways. What we know in history is that the Romans were very influential in creating some of the practices of Christians--and many of these practices (and the definitions of function that accompany them) are still carried on to this day.

And then there is Jesus' warning about the Romans....In the Bible, Jesus clearly and specifically warned His followers about the "kings of the Gentiles --the princes of the Gentiles-- them that are accounted to rule over the Gentiles" (obviously the Romans were the Gentile rulers over Israel) in that they "exercise authority one over another among themselves". He very clearly said "not so among you"-- do not follow the concept of one person exercising authority over others. (Matthew 20:25-26, Mark 10:42-45, Luke 22:25-29)

And he said unto them, **The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.**
But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.
(Luke 22:25-26)

In the 4th century a group of Christians sat down in counsel with Roman emperors and drastically reformed church practice. In so doing they accepted an authoritarian system of Christianity and very clearly and specifically turned their back on the apostleship of the New Testament, in favor of a system that is based on the old testament Jewish temple.

The Old Testament temple became the basis for the functioning of the church service and the definition of ministry. Most Christians don't realize the church service is based on the Old Testament. And specifically on the sacrificial aspects--the 'stuff' that Israel had to do in order to have their sin forgiven. Of course it is more than clear that Jesus' offering on the cross and His resurrection offers a completely new way for sins to be forgiven. But to believe and teach a new covenant way of forgiveness and at the same time to practice old covenant ways which have the same purpose Biblically is most certainly an hypocrisy--a bit of that "leaven" that Jesus warned of.

In the Old Testament in order to have their sins forgiven Israel had to.....

.....build and maintain a large building called the house of God.....

.....they entered by gates of praise and worship so they had a format where praise and worship came first.....

.....when they entered the building there was an altar, and on the altar were the altar ministers, the priests/pastors of Israel, the Levitical priests who were the delegated, designated, anointed, appointed, ordained authority.....

.....the majority of Israel were often referred to as the congregation. The congregation was not allowed to minister in the meeting, but rather to bring in the tithes/offerings that supported

all of this, that paid for the building and in fact paid for these full-time paid professional ministers.

Sounds familiar?

So you see there is a biblical defense for the church service but it comes from the Old Testament. Many would argue that this is the only sort of governmental basis that the Bible gives us. People readily look in the New Testament and don't see a government. I personally do. I see that Christ is the Head of all things, and that seems to be the government to me! The New Testament says that He is the head of every man-- we have a king or ruler who can simultaneously lead billions of Christians all at the same time and operate in the supernatural and miraculous realm.

We have the example of Jesus' earthly ministry as recorded in the Bible as what ought to be the highest example of the will of God. Jesus exemplified a ministry that centered on meeting people's needs. The people who followed Him in the Bible did exactly the same. This simply means there is no static form of meeting or government, rather ongoing changing instructions from the Head, which every believer can access. Absolutely we are called to work together in the spreading of the Gospel, I do not believe we are called to become a community, a nation. We are meant to be an invisible kingdom operated by God.

It's very hard, having been indoctrinated into old covenant practice for Christians to even see the new covenant ideas. We are so very familiar with a kingdom we can see. We see so many many other very good people following along with these practices and definitions. It seems right, it seems to benefit us, to bless us.

There is an overriding force that pushes people toward seeking one leader that they can see--while we ought to be constantly seeking to find and build an invisible kingdom with a Leader who is

not physically present. The 3 warnings about authority that Jesus gave His followers ought to show us that this is a possibility. Here they were following Jesus in the flesh, doing the work with Him, and yet they sought to find human rulership and authority. They listened to Him teach about the Father's will and authority, they saw the miracles and heard the love He taught. They saw Him placing children first, helping the poor and needy, going to the sinners, not hiding from them...and yet, they wanted positions of power, they wanted a rulership they could see.

It is a human tendency, a sinful human tendency. So here we are following after a God we do not see, who is asking us to build a kingdom that is not of this earth. How easy it is for us to follow the earthly, the things we can see and hear and sense, that seem to be of God.....in favor of the intangible aspects of love and faith and a God who rules from the Heavens.

Hard for us to comprehend a God who can lead us in everything, through whomever He chooses, at any given moment in time.

We see Israel in the Old Testament was asked to be a nation of priests, but they turned their back on that aspect of the covenant and asked God to be a nation like other nations and so God created the Levitical priesthood to have authority. However the history of Israel is that the priests became corrupt and so God brought judges and the judges became corrupt and God brought kings and the kings became corrupt and then God brought the King of Kings to be the true ruler of his people. Yet even then not all would listen or accept His kingdom.

What's wrong with these Old Testament basis is just what I said at the beginning these were the practices that Israel had to do to have their sin forgiven. The Temple practices, building the Temple, meeting repetitively on the Sabbath day, tithes and offerings, full-time paid professional ministry on an altar, a congregation who

worked in the world and were not ministers but rather had the job of bringing in the support for all this. The tithes/offerings were largely animals and specific crops--earthly things that God asked to be offered to Him. In other words this temple practices were functions that Israel had to maintain and do over and over again in order to have their sin forgiven in order to make atonement for sin. (leviticus 17:11).

But there's something even more simple to understand and more glaring about taking on these practices for Christians and that is simply that in the Old Testament Israel did not have a gospel to witness! They did not have Jesus. They did not have the cross. They did not have the resurrection or the Holy Spirit. They didn't have a gospel to carry and of course they didn't do apostleship they had no example of it and they had no reason to do it. Israel could not have had a Gospel oriented meeting, since they had no Gospel! So it's very unfortunate that most Christians are trapped in these old covenant practices and therefore disconnected with apostleship and witnessing the gospel. To me it seems as if so many many good Christians are unaware of the Gospel, sort of living in an old testament shell--spending so much of their time effort and resources in an unnecessary temple.

The rules of the church service go against the major principles of apostleship. The rules of the church service are preordained, we know we are to meet at a certain time, we meet repetitively week after week on a certain day, we meet in a building that we fund. We have worship 1st, teaching next-- we are going to expect tithes and offerings to be brought in to support the structure and fund this plan. In the course of the meeting there is a minister who will teach everyone and the authority of that minister over others is to such a high degree by tradition that the only response allowed to that minister is an amen.

The practice of "amen authority" is I think what falls the farthest outside of apostleship and brings us into a whole other realm of

authoritarian human government. And many a church teacher might authentically be attempting to teach people that they are free in Christ--that they are ministers and ought to witness the Gospel--and yet--the format of the meeting allows no voice to the "sheep" who are permanently in that position of submission to an authority that they can only say "amen" to.

The system is designed to keep us from practicing what we preach.

So if we look at Christianity through the church service, it brings us in a completely opposite direction to Biblical apostleship. Is everyone in ministry? No absolutely not. We see ministry as being a paid professional position that exercises authority over others. Ministry I believe is the most mystifying thing in Christianity and it's got that way through the tradition of the church service. And one of the strongest effects of these practices is that the Christian meeting is emphasized as the center of Christian practice, rather than witnessing, rather than apostleship. We end up believing that God wants us to meet endlessly in a way that excludes the new testament Gospel practices. Again, please understand that many many good Christian leaders try to teach people to witness, however we are always tied to our practice--to what we do. And in fact it can become the leaven of the Pharisees--the hypocrisy of saying one thing and doing another.

So often Gospel witnessing falls flat in traditional church. It is drowned out by the overriding concept of shepherd/sheep. People see a minister as someone who only gets an amen for everything that they say. Churches see success as a larger building and more tithe-paying members. So when someone steps out and is rejected in their witnessing they see themselves as failures. The pastor who encouraged it feels as if the people have no concept of how to minister correctly. The concept of sowing and letting God reap the harvest is a hard one to fit into our tradition, yet that is exactly how God works!

As far as authority goes again, Amen authority is something that falls outside the boundaries of every aspect of the Bible even the Old Testament. In the Old Testament Moses went to Mount Sinai and stood in the presence of God, came back with his face glowing from being in the presence of God and Israel argued with him! Jesus who spoke the perfect word of God and did the perfect will of the Father, and yet He allowed Himself to be disagreed with- not only by the Pharisees but by his own followers! If Jesus, who was God. who was perfect. could walk as a man in ministry and not say "you have to say amen to me every time I say something"-- well I just wonder how we have this idea of amen authority in among ourselves today!? Of course people of today did not invent the pulpit--they simply inherited it from Rome--from the kings of the Gentiles who exercise authority one over another among themselves.

Perhaps the success of the Biblical apostles came from the fact that Jesus did not ask them to "amen" everything He said. I wonder if anyone has ever thought of that?

The deception of it lies in that these are the rules of human government that we are very familiar with. If we elect a leader and we fund a leader we can build things and create things and so we create things that we can see and are familiar with. These established traditions have been in existence for so long that biblical buzzwords have been invented to try to hold them up as the correct way of functioning. So that when we use new testament words like "assembly" or "submit to the rule" we are actually speaking of the old testament. And I believe that the area we are farthest away in is the area of ministry. The words pastor or teacher or evangelist are much more considered as titles of authority and rulership rather than descriptions of functions that describe the humble services that the new covenant Christians were performing for God.

This is a complicated subject area, and the ideas of human government in the church falls far outside of the simple idea of us working together as equals and having Christ to be the only head and allowing Christ to be the only authority of the church. We ought to see that repeatedly functioning under the concept of human authority is clearly moving in the opposite direction.

As for structured function, we can see clearly in the New Testament example in 1st Corinthians 14:26....

"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."
(1Corinthians 14:26)

An example of using the Bible as a set of numbered laws, and what we might call church buzzwordology.....

This quote is in 1 corinthians chapter 14--this area of scripture is speaking about the Christian meeting--the assembly of believers and what it ought to look like. Not that long after in the book of Hebrews 10:25 we read that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. This somewhat infamous quote is often used to scold someone who does not attend a weekly church service! How could this be when the rules of the weekly service were invented a few hundred years after the Bible account ends. Certainly the method of assembly that Hebrew 10:25 is speaking of is the one described in the new testament--the example of Jesus' meetings in the Gospel--the examples of the early church in Acts--and summed up in 1 Corinthians 14:26--an assembly where everyone can speak, teach, prophecy--in other words everyone can minister. And the highest result is to edify--which means to build up the Body, which of course is referring to Gospel witnessing.

The new testament gives the right to teach to everyone--within the Christian meeting. Of course the rules of the church service say something quite different! They set up a repetitive pattern where one person teaches and everyone else is silent. The rules of the church service give powerful authority to this teacher--the only allowable response to this person's teaching is "amen"--that is gigantic authority, does not exist Biblically, and certainly is moving in the opposite direction of equity in terms of ministry and function.

The worse effect in my opinion is that most people don't believe they are in ministry. Most Christians see ministry as something they are not in, and in fact it would be disobedient to think you are in ministry (this especially has to do with the money-giving system in place). The tradition of the church service says that the ministry leader receives and handles the money and has a paid professional position so if you're just an average Christian and you think you have ministry to do, other Christians will look at you and believe you are asking for money. "Who do you think you are? Do you think you're going to get paid now?" There is a very strong connection from the tradition of the church service that tells us that ministry equals money and ministry equals authority over others. So if you say you're in ministry then it seems as if you're trying to take over the group and be a ruler, and perhaps that you're trying to split up the church!

How far we are disconnected from simple apostleship!

More about amen authority.....

When we see "ministry" as someone who steps into a pulpit and teaches, and everyone, 100% of the time says "amen" we get a very very wrong idea of what ministry is.

You can search back and forth through your Bible and you will not

find anyone who had amen authority. Not even Jesus--who of course deserved an amen for absolutely everything that He said!

When we see this very overpowering example of Christian ministry as being someone who somehow has such an “amazing anointing” that every word they say deserves an amen, we then have a very wrong idea of what ministry truly is.

So then when we step outside the box of church and witness the Gospel and people disagree, or laugh or ignore us we think that we are failures. We think that Gospel witnessing is a failure, that it doesn't work, since we didn't receive the amen from everyone we spoke to.

An interesting quick study on Jesus' name's sake...(all NT scriptures that contain the words name and sake).....

Mt 10:22* And ye shall be hated of all men for my **name's sake**: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Mt 19:29* And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my **name's sake**, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Mt 24:9* Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my **name's sake**.

Mr 13:13* And ye shall be hated of all men for my **name's sake**: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Lu 6:22* Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your **name** as evil, for the Son of man's **sake**.

Lu 21:12* But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my **name's sake**.

Lu 21:17* And ye shall be hated of all men for my **name's sake**.

Joh 15:20-21* Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my **name's sake**, because they know not him

that sent me.

Ac 9:16* For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my **name's sake**.

1Jo 2:12* I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his **name's sake**.

3Jo 7* Because that for his **name's sake** they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

Re 2:3* And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my **name's sake** hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

We all love 1John 2:12....."your sins are forgiven you for his **name's sake**." and well we should, because we are forgiven of sin by the name of Jesus, "for His name's sake".....however, what does the Bible say will happen when we speak the Gospel out to the world? When we pray for the sick and help the poor and carry on Christ's mission, when we do those things for 'His name's sake'?

Doesn't sound so good! Certainly not the 100% amen that tradition has told us that ministry is all about!! People will reject us, persecute us, and if we will step out and tell people the name of Jesus we will suffer for it in this life--people certainly are NOT going to say amen all the time folks!!

What a big misconception we have been given by the church amen.

I believe that this is why so often groups of Christians see Gospel witnessing as a failure. Something they may have tried and failed at.

The system of church demands that any witnessing done must lead to an increase in church membership. But think back to what we studied about Biblical apostleship. "I sowed, Appollos watered but it was God who gave the increase"....the believer, the apostle, doing the work in the world of witnessing and helping, but God

who reaps the harvest, God who builds His kingdom of souls. God does the accounting, He counts the members, He knows who has believed in their heart that Jesus is Lord.

So what can you do? How can you find apostleship? I believe there are ways for individuals to find correct apostleship and that is simply to follow the 1st 2 purposes that Jesus set us as believers.

"But **seek ye first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

The 1st thing we are supposed to do is "seek His kingdom and His righteousness" I think that advice applies to apostleship. Let God define your own ministry--let Him show you how you can serve Him and spread His Gospel. Far too few Christians find their ministry.

The word kingdom confuses people, perhaps because we tend to think of the word kingdom as a place. Now there is heavenly kingdom the real place where God lives-- but if you study that word kingdom it also means the right of a ruler to rule. When Jesus was talking about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God if he was speaking of the literal heaven then why did he say the kingdom of God is within you? The word kingdom has another meaning, which is 'the right or authority of a ruler to rule his subjects'. So when Jesus said to seek 1st his kingdom he is saying to first seek God's authority, God's plan, for your life. Put this above other things, don't go along with the crowd, what you see other people doing. Seek 1st his kingdom and his righteousness that literally means 'his righteous acts of charity or love' which I believe is a description of ministry. So if you understand that it's saying to seek 1st God's leadership and find your own ministry.

(Let's quickly compare this advice to the traditional plan of Christian progress--ministry is the very last stop for the believer--something held out of reach to most--something deemed to require years of training and in fact only for the very very few to attain to!)

Seek 1st God's authority, His leadership and find the righteous acts of service that will spread His gospel.

This leads us to understand ministry as a gift. Just as we receive the free gift of eternal life as individuals, by repentance and faith in Christ--so too we ought to receive our calling from God to serve Him. Ministry is not something that we ought to pay for or something we need to earn, or something that is meant to be under human authority and control. True Godly ministry is a gift "given unto every one of us"....to be received as individuals, yet of course knowing and understanding that the highest call is to work together in God's love. That's how to find your apostleship.

Believe, have faith that God is in you and can work through you. In ephesians chapter 4, where the "5-fold ministry" is spoken of, the Bible emphasizes the fact that this gift is in all and through all because God is in all and through all. All, all, all.

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:31-32)

More advice from Jesus that we can add to that comes from what we might call his 1st priorities which are his 1st 2 commandments. They go right along with this one which is of course "love God and love your neighbor". This is again basically the same advice. Love

God. Well if you love God, you are seeking His will. You will want to ask Him what He wants you to do. Now of course God wants us to bring our own needs to Him as well. It seems to me that most Christians are taught their place in Christianity is to continually bring their needs to God but they are rarely taught to seek His will, and find out what He wants you to do for Him. Do we ever get to the point where we ask God how we can serve Him? But I believe that we need to 1st put that seeking and love in its proper place and then our own needs will be met by God. That's why "all these things will be added unto you"-- after you 1st have found the will of God for your life in terms of how you're going to serve him and spread his gospel.

How often have you heard the advice to first find your ministry-- and then you will find God's blessing?

So it's really very simple. Pray and ask God what ministry you have, pray and ask God how you can serve Him and you'll find that He wants you to love your neighbor He wants you to be sent out with the gospel. He wants you to help the poor and the needy, He want you to visit people who are imprisoned and minister to the homeless. There is what I call a short list of things that Jesus asked us to do in the Bible and it's basically the ones I've just mentioned. Find poor people, find needy people, find the homeless, visit people in prison and find people who are oppressed. Cast out the Devil, pray for the sick, help the poor and needy, spread the Gospel in every way possible.

Understand that the attributes of true new testament ministry are humbleness, lowliness and meekness (Ephesians 4). Those are the attributes to seek after in your Godly service. Find others who are already there--they may not follow every doctrine that you have been taught, but remember how Jesus looked at the man who was casting out demons in His name who was not following along with the apolstes and said "he who is not against us is for us". Ministry

should be the thing we are the most open-minded about, since it is so important for God to build His kingdom.

God is a whole lot less fussy about ministry than we are.

How specifically will you find the ways that God wants you to serve Him? That's what you will find out when you pray and ask Him! He has specific and individualized instructions for each of us. This is why meeting endlessly in a ritual is exactly what Christians ought not to do. We need to meet with the highest function being the release of the Gospel. We need to see the witnessing of the Gospel as an end in itself.

Now what things will be added unto you after you find God's will and find your gospel related ministry? That's where meeting with other Christians will come in. Once you find your ministry you'll find more than likely that there are already other Christians doing the same stuff that you're trying to do. You see, the apostles are out there we just haven't named them, we haven't found them. You'll find other Christians ministering to the poor, helping the sick, and witnessing the gospel and creating things that release other people to do the gospel. There are so many many different ways of spreading the gospel and you'll find that there are some Christians doing those things. Often they themselves may not know that they are working in apostleship and you know what, it doesn't matter! (in fact often it is better to not overwhelm people with your knowledge in this area--at least at first--they know what they are doing is right, so don't mess with it!) If you name it or not, apostleship may be unknown, yet it is something extremely important in God's eyes. What's most important about it is that you can get to it and do it. But you need to set aside the rules that you may have been taught through the tradition of the church service that say that you are not a minister and that you don't have the authority to do these things.

Money should be one of the least concerns that you have. Jesus taught this. Jesus taught that money is about the last concern that you should have. In fact money could possibly be something that you serve instead of God so it's very important to seek free ministry. Ministry that you can do for free and not be involved in money. When I think of the apostles who sowed the seed of the word of God into me and led me to salvation they were certainly not being paid for their apostleship and they did ask me to pay them either, they were doing it because God led them to do it. It was the pure love of God which has absolutely nothing to do with money.

The bias of traditional church which says that meeting is above witnessing has a strong basis in money. I believe it then becomes an impure motive. A number of times I have spoken to church leaders, who, when I describe the idea of everyone in ministry and the church focused on Gospel witnessing have replied to me that they had already tried that and it didn't work. In thinking about this answer, I have come to realize that they simply have a wrong goal. Gospel witnessing does not always equate into church membership. The real truth is that most of the time when we witness, people will ignore and reject us. The acceptance of the Gospel is God's judgement, His business.

I believe it is very important for Christians to see the purity of Gospel witnessing as a final result. As Paul described apostleship....

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (1Corinthians 3: 5-7)

True ministry, the "humble lowly and meek " ministry (Ephesians 4) produces a result that builds God's kingdom--and not our own. It is a spiritual kingdom, a spiritual result we need to strive toward rather than physical ones we can see. The sowing of the Word as our end of the bargain gives God the authority to run the Church. It gives God the responsibility of growing, of increasing. This is true church growth--not a membership we can see each week in a building, but rather a membership we will see in eternity, in Heaven, forever. It is the eternal treasure that Jesus asked us to seek...

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
(Matthew 6: 19-21)

This to me seems perfect rebuke of the church leader who is so interested in the earthly treasure of a full church building, and therefore a full church treasury, and becoming blind to the treasure of the saved soul that God desires us to seek after.

I have so often seen the idea taught that discipleship as the end result of Christian witnessing. Yes the Bible says to make disciples of all nations. Once again the tradition of church turns this idea to mean--get people into church where they can be permanent students. Yes the Bible tells us to study and to teach, but look with open eyes at the new testament. The believers were studying and learning while they ministered the Gospel. It's like walking and chewing gum at the same time--can you do it? Of course you can!

When I started teaching about ministry, authority, and church operation many people thought I was making up the manifesto for

home church but as I said many times home church is absolutely not the answer to how to meet with other Christians. Home churches can and very often do end up stuck in very similar repetitive practices that traditional churches do and in fact I find that most home churches witness the gospel even less than traditional churches. Now don't get me wrong because the home meeting can be a place where you can learn your own authority and learn how to be an equal with other Christians and possibly learn that you do have ministry, but very often home churches get bound up with similar types of functions and authority that lead to repetitive practices and leave out the gospel. The idea that meeting is the end result we ought to seek, can just as readily overtake the Gospel at home.

So many home meetings are just meetings of believers. Where is the "room of the unlearned" mentioned in 1 corinthians 14? What priority do we give to inviting unsaved people into the meeting? And how often do we ask God where and when and who and how we ought to do the Gospel? It is very easy to turn a home meeting, a place of great potential, into a mini church service. A place where we meet God, get our needs met, and very easily end it there.

I find that home churches are often running away from traditional ministry. Terrific, I agree wholeheartedly with that idea. But the idea that many home meetings have is that no one should do ministry. That ministry is sort of a naughty bad word--don't mention it. What a big mistake. We need to turn away from our experience, even the bad part of the experience, and ask God about the humble, lowly and meek ministry that he has for us to do.

Most Christian groups fall to the concept that the central purpose of Christianity is to meet. The purpose of Christianity is not to meet with other Christians it's to witness the gospel! So what happens often to home church meetings is that they work on up a

sort of perfect way of meeting and repeating it week after week after week. Who told you that you had to meet weekly? Did you really ask God? Is it because almost all churches meet once a week and it may not be on Sunday and maybe on Tuesday afternoon but they meet once a week. Why are you meeting every week? I believe the meetings of Christians, the assembly of Christians is something we should not forsake but it's not something that we have to do repetitively over and over again-- forever. A successful Christian assembly ought to produce gospel ministry. And if it's not producing gospel ministry then we need to stop the parade and say wait a minute, we are just doing a pattern of meeting and meeting and meeting a meeting and we've forsaken the gospel, and probably because we simply did not ask God but went ahead and followed after what we have seen other people do.

Everywhere the Bible describes an assembly of Christians it was designed as a one-time event to release people to serve God and witness the gospel. If you look at the description of the church in the book of acts and the upper room, they met, were filled with the Spirit, and immediately witnessed the Gospel (they "spoke the wonderful works of God"). They went out and shared the gospel and immediately got many people baptized that day. They certainly did not continue meeting in the upper room as some kind of holy place. It goes on to say that they met in the Temple and house to house (Acts 2:46). Now that is specifically what God was asking those people to do at that time to further the Gospel. If you read what was happening in Acts chapters 2 to 7 we see by meeting in the Temple and meeting house to house they were getting people saved on a daily basis.

“.....And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:47)

If we could grasp the idea of ongoing small-group meetings in

many places. we can then understand how they had the result that God added to the church daily. Notice the it was God that added to the church. This is one of the many verifications in the new testament that Gospel witnessing places the authority in God's hands. The true spirit of loving other people, and meeting their needs while letting them know that the good work is done in Jesus' name, this is the true sowing of the Gospel. When it is done with pure intent, without expectations of physical gain (membership, money) God is then in charge. God then has authority.

Meeting in the temple was not a rule. It's quite obvious that the latter churches which were located in other areas of the world were not meeting in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem! So you see the purpose of all the meetings was the gospel, it was not to find the perfect place to meet and do it over and over again and simply teach ourselves or simply worship God. The purpose was to carry the gospel in different ways in different places as God lead them in these small groups.

These early believers went into the Temple not to follow the rules of the Temple. They certainly would feel ridiculous, bringing in tithes and offerings--the payment for sin--and at the same time teaching that Jesus blood was the payment for sin! No, I believe they met in the Temple to do just what Jesus did--which was to preach the kingdom of God to the people there. It is clear they met with some of the same resistance that Jesus did but they also had a result that many of the priests became believers (Acts 6:7). Again it is this conversion that is the highest goal--certainly not taking on the Temple as a form of Christian practice.

The Bible describes a number of one-time meetings with people which resulted in great gospel ministry. In fact in the new testament it is impossible to find a reference to any ongoing

meetings. Unfortunately tradition has taken up many words in the new testament and claimed that they are speaking of a permanent ongoing, weekly meeting. Words like church, fellowship or assembly are translated by our traditional experience as such. For example when we read the word church in the Bible we tend to think they were meeting every Sunday or meeting over and over again or even meeting in their homes. The truth is that church is the description of the people in an area who believe in God. Perhaps we should understand that it is God's definition of church--a spiritual assembly--the people who He sees that truly believe in Him. Remember the new testament is always placing God in authority, not man!

Now of course when they met together they would worship God, and certainly sometimes people within the group would teach one another, absolutely those things were going on. I believe we should do those things together as believers (perhaps in an even more organized way than in a once a week church service!). However the central purpose of those meetings was apostleship and when you look in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 there is a description of the ministries of the church and the Bible states "first apostles". The word first means just what it sounds like--"of most importance. of first priority--primarily". We ought to primarily be seeking after apostleship. If we could grasp how simple apostleship is, then it is not at all an unattainable goal.

"First apostles" does not mean that the apostles had rulership over the church! It meant that the 1st priority of serving God and the central purpose of meeting is to carry on into this apostleship, to send people outward with the gospel, to get connected with how God wants us sow the word of God out in the world. To pray and ask God how we can meet the needs of the people around us. Following Christ as the highest example.

And that's what it's all about. But I believe the instructions in the

way that these people were meeting was not to create a perfect ritual, but rather to meet to be released to serve God. This is how Jesus did things. When Jesus fed the 5000 He said he had to "send away" the crowds--what was he doing? Was He saying-- "Okay the show is over everybody go home"?! I believe He was purposefully doing a part of the gospel which is to release others to carry on His purposes. If we look back at Luke chapter 4 verse 18 in 19 Jesus describes the gospel to be brought to the poor. These 2 verses say that a part of the gospel is healing and deliverance. Jesus describes that we should bring those ministries and the authority and power we have from God to the poor and needy, blind and lame-- those that are in need.

However in the last line of verse 19 Jesus says He has come "to set at liberty them that are bruised to preach the acceptable year the Lord" If you put that thought together fully Jesus is saying He has come to set at liberty those that are bruised so they will preach the acceptable year of the Lord. The small word "set" is the Greek apostello. I believe this is saying that a part of the Gospel is something called apostolic liberty--a freedom, a release, to serve God, to be sent by God and Him alone, to spread His Good News. It is a part of the Gospel to give apostolic liberty to people who were unsaved so that they will go and preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Read that bit of knowledge into what you see Jesus doing in the new testament and I think it will bear truth with you. One glaring example of this is demonstrated when Jesus met the demon possessed man in the book of Mark chapter 5.

The man was demon possessed, certainly bruised physically literally bruised (he cut himself). The Bible says he was possessed of a legion of demons. Jesus meets Him--the literal Good News in the flesh and so He imparts the gospel to him. Part of which is to bring deliverance from the enemy and so the devil leaves the man.

But at the end of that meeting the man says to Jesus that he wants to follow him and Jesus says that he ought to just “go tell what great thing God has done for you”. The Bible then tells us that this formerly demon possessed man, without any apparent training or tutelage goes out and preaches to 10 cities. Again ministry-- apostleship-- as a release, as a gift of God that is given by God, granted by God immediately. Ministry as a gift--just as salvation is a gift.

Do we tell the new convert that it takes years and years to get saved-- a lot of studying a lot of work? Of course not because we have found out that the Bible says that salvation is a gift, a grace, fully won by Jesus by His death and resurrection! Jesus has already done all that is necessary for eternal salvation by dying on the cross and being resurrected. He's made the way to heaven for everyone to be saved and has died for the sin of every person. What one needs to do is repent of sin and believe in Him and accept His work in order to receive salvation. We understand the gospel is a grace do we understand ministry as a grace? Do we understand our apostleship as a gift, as a part of the of the gospel itself? Do we understand that this apostleship is really how the New Testament church functions?

Do we really understand apostleship as how God gets people saved and how you got saved?

The wonderful advice that Jesus gives this man is so simple "go and tell what great thing God has done for you". I believe this is the core of the Gospel call on the life of every believer. God has done a great thing for each and every one of us! He has saved us from hell with His blood sacrifice and His resurrection! He may have healed you or delivered you from worldly snares. This is the core of your ministry--the "great thing" God has done for you. It is a slightly different deliverance/healing for each of us and I believe there is a purpose in this. I believe we ought to minister as

God calls us in many different ways, but there is often a great basis in our ministry found in the great thing that God did for us when we were saved by Him. Because the truth is that there are many many other people who are lost out there--who are just as lost as we were before we met Jesus. People who simply do not know that there is a God who loves them --who loves them enough to heal them or deliver them from their problems. And in the experience--the testimony that God has put inside of all of us of what He has done in our lives, there is the root of a ministry, a calling from Him to share with others this great thing the He has done.

And do we see that in spite of what we see around us we can be connected with this apostleship that God has for each of us? It is the place of putting Jesus as the true Head of all things. It is the actions of seeking His will to meet the needs that He leads us to. Selfless Gospel actions that have nothing at all todo with money or human authority. It is love in it's purest form, a gift from God shared. And by sharing freely all the authority is placed in God's hands. It is the faith and love of God in action in ways that are not about creating things for ourselves in this earth but building a spiritual, an invisible kingdom by sowing the near invisible seed of His word and understanding He does and will send others to sow, others whom we may or may not know since the faith and trust is in an invisible God who is in charge of us and therefore it is He who gives the increase. It is He who is in control. It is He who is God.