

# Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

*Equipping Simple/Organic Church Leaders*

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**THIS MODULE**

## PART C – PREPARING TO MULTIPLY

### Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

#### Topic 1 Kingdom Advance

#### Session 1 A Relational Base

#### Kingdom advance?

As we “prepare to multiply”, this first topic puts on the table three crucial areas that are vital for Kingdom advance. In my experience, unless these three aspects are positively and responsibly engaged with, multiplication is rarely possible.

“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”  
(Matthew 6:33)

Every Kingdom has three primary legs upon which it stands: a **relational** base, an **authority** base and an **economic** base.

- Without a relational base, a sense of legacy and responsibility, a kingdom deteriorates into **tyranny**.  
*If a king feels no responsibility to leave an inheritance for his people, his rule will become excessive and exploitive, and will last only one generation (to the relief of his oppressed citizens!)*
- Without an authority base, a sense of order and accountability, a kingdom reverts to **anarchy**.
- Without an economic base, a sense of generosity and stewardship, a kingdom suffers **poverty**.

#### A Relational Base

Relationships are essential to the Kingdom; our vertical relationship with God is to be worked out in horizontal relationships with others. Unfortunately, in an institutional construct of church, relationships are secondary and subservient to the institution or organisation. In contrast, relationships are primary in God’s Kingdom and it is imperative that we understand covenant relationships. Yet the level of intimacy, honesty and sacrifice required in true relationships may be intimidating to some. It’s sometimes easier and convenient to merely pay one’s dues to an impersonal system, but easy and convenient do not advance the Kingdom.

One day a pig and chicken were having a good ‘ol chin-wag ... forgive me, I have two young daughters. They were discussing how best they could contribute to mankind. They envied the cow that provided milk. They admired the sheep for contributing wool. What could they do to serve mankind?

Suddenly, the chicken had a light bulb moment: “I know ... we can provide mankind with breakfast ... bacon and eggs!” The pig was excited for exactly 0.2 seconds. “No way! You just have to give a few eggs,” he realised, “breakfast would cost me my bacon!”

Covenant relationships cost us our bacon. While the world builds Kleenex relationships on **convenient contributions** that are conditional and as flimsy as toilet paper. God calls us to build relationships on **covenant commitment** – unconditional and selfless love – that stand the test of time (and the numerous tests that are a part of living Kingdom life together).

A kingdom without a relational base, a sense of legacy and responsibility, deteriorates into **tyranny**. However, when we understand a relational base, we seek to reveal the Father-heart of God to others, serving their Kingdom destiny rather using people for our personal gain.

So how do we build covenant relationships?

Natural relationships are crafted on two questions: (1) “How do **I** fit in?” and (2) “How will **I** benefit?” **Seeking personal security or significance**, the underlying attitude is to **use** and **get**. The focus is on “me, myself and I”; as a **consumer**, I’m seeking what’s in it for me.

Covenant relationships, however, are created on two very different questions: (1) “Where is **God** adding me?” and (2) “What does God desire of **us**?” **Cooperating with the Spirit of God**, the attitude is to **discover** and **give**. The focus is on God’s will and what He desires for us together; as a **contributor**, I’m willing to selflessly serve others.

Finally, **covenant relationships are built on liberty and life not obligation or entitlement**.

Paul taught: “Owe no one anything except to love one another” (Romans 13:8). I don’t own my community and I don’t owe them anything: “**except to love**” – and this is a mighty exception. I am to cherish them as a gift from God and to give myself completely to them as God enables me. But since my identity remains in Christ alone, I don’t attempt to own them or feel indebted due to my own insecurities or need for affirmation. In covenant we acknowledge: “Because I don’t own you and you don’t own me, I don’t owe you and you don’t owe me. Now we can truly love and serve one another”. Only then are we free from an *attitude of obligation* or a *spirit of entitlement*. Now love-fuelled relationships are possible.

#### What are the core ingredients necessary for building covenant relationships in Him?

Next > Topic 1, Session 2: An Authority Base

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Topic 1 has three sessions ...

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**Topic 1** Kingdom Advance  
**Session 2** *An Authority Base*

**Kingdom advance?**

As we “prepare to multiply”, we’re looking at the crucial areas vital for Kingdom advance in this first topic; without positively engaging with them, multiplication is seldom possible.

**“God has appointed these in the church: first apostles...”**  
(1 Corinthians 12:28)

Every Kingdom has three primary legs upon which it stands: a **relational** base, an **authority** base and an **economic** base.

- Without a relational base, a sense of legacy and responsibility, a kingdom deteriorates into **tyranny**.
- Without an authority base, a sense of order and accountability, a kingdom reverts to **anarchy**. *If a king has no genuine governmental clout, he becomes a figure-head without teeth, able only to watch lawlessness spread and with it, his kingdom burn.*
- Without an economic base, a sense of generosity and stewardship, a kingdom suffers **poverty**.

**An Authority Base**

Due to misuse and abuse, authority is seen as a dirty word by many today. But **all true authority flows from the Father-heart of God** (Romans 13:1ff). In fact, and this may meddle with your mind at first, authority operates in the Godhead. Jesus said, **“As the Father sent Me, I also send you”** (John 20:21). Father God did not say to Jesus, “Son, if you have some time on your hands ...”. He sent Jesus. Jesus also said, speaking of the Holy Spirit, **“the Father will send [Him] in My name”** (John 14:26). Again, Father God did not say, “Holy Spirit, what’s your take on My proposal?” Father God sent the Spirit.

Of course we’ll struggle with this as long as we view it as institutional (imposed) authority rather than relational (invited) authority. But when we view authority in the relational context it belongs, the problems dissipate. I’m convinced that when we grasp a Hebrew mindset – understanding that “community” is essentially family and “leadership” is spiritual parenting – the concept of authority is no longer a threatening word. When we view authority in the context of love-filled parents and a life-giving family, we unwrap the blessings that God intends through it.

A kingdom without an authority base, a sense of order and accountability, reverts to **anarchy**. However, when we understand an authority base, we appreciate God-given relational-authority and become intentional – rather than blob-like – in our advance of the Kingdom in cooperation with the Spirit.

Let’s now look at the first of two core allocations of God-authorized leadership that facilitates intentional Kingdom life and multiplication ...

**Apostolic authority** (Please review “An Apostolic Wineskin,” p. 7 and “The Apostolic Connection,” p. 13)

Jesus said, **“All authority has been given to Me ... Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”** (Matthew 28:18, 19). The word Jesus used for **“authority”** is the Greek word *exousia* and refers to **delegated authority**; authority entrusted from Jesus Himself **to apostles**. This was not a mandate given to every believer, but was given specifically to the **“eleven”** apostles (Matthew 28:16). Obviously every believer has a role to play in the fulfilment of the Great Commission, but Jesus first entrusted this authority to apostles. **While every believer has a responsibility in it; the apostles are entrusted with functional responsibility for it.**

After Paul laboured to teach the worth and value of every single **“member”** of the **“body”** (1 Corinthians 12:12-27), he then concluded by stating: **“God has appointed these in the church: first apostles...”** (v. 28). Paul was certainly not advocating some “top-of-the-pile” super-apostle; that would contradict all he had just taught. Instead, he was referring to **priority or sequence of function** in fulfilling the Great Commission. The grace gift of apostle is not more important than other gifts but it is to be deployed functionally first; as an “architect” (1 Corinthians 3:10), an apostle helps to establish new spiritual communities to advance the Kingdom of God.

Standing in Christ’s authority an apostolic team is entrusted with a God-given relational “sphere of influence” in which they help to plant and serve churches. Paul wrote, **“We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us”** (2 Corinthians 10:13). The phrase **“limits of the sphere”** literally means, “measure of rule” and speaks of the “boundary lines of God-given responsibility”. In the difficulties associated with the church in Corinth, for example, Paul appealed to them as a spiritual father on the basis of his apostolic *exousia*: **“I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority [exousia] which the Lord has given me for edification”** (2 Corinthians 13:10 c. 1 Corinthians 4:15, 16).

In this “sphere of influence” an apostolic team appoints parent-elders to shepherd the flock (parent the family), which we look at next. The core principle to grasp here is that the first delegation of Jesus’ *exousia* relational-authority is to apostolic teams who, with a parent’s heart and a servant’s attitude, spearhead the advance of the Great Commission. (Please read the resource links at the bottom of the page).

**Why is an understanding of Hebrew values so important as we consider authority?**

**Next> Topic 1, Session 2 Continued**

**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**

How does authority work? <Like father, like son>

What is an apostle? <Definitely maybe>

**PART C – PREPARING TO MULTIPLY**  
**Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom**

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**Topic 1** Kingdom Advance

**Session 2** *An Authority Base Continued*

**An Authority Base Continued**

Father God has entrusted all authority (Greek word: *exousia*) to Jesus, the Head of the Church (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23). In His authority, Jesus gives an apostolic team a "sphere of influence" in which they plant and serve churches; these churches become the beach-head for Kingdom advance in their region and every facet of society.

**"let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour"**  
 (1 Timothy 5:17)

As we've made clear, their architectural function is to establish a new work on the foundation of Christ with the express purpose of developing a self-governing community, at which point their hands-on function becomes redundant. Towards this end, a second transfer of *exousia* authority occurs as an apostolic team appoints parent-leaders, which the Bible calls "**elders**". Let's look at this second leadership role.

**Eldership rule** (Please review "The Hebrew Mindset," p. 6)

Paul and his team "**appointed elders in every church**" and thus "**commended them to the Lord**" (Acts 14:23); the final step in developing a self-governing community. Towards this goal, he instructed Titus and Timothy to "**appoint elders**" in the churches they were sent to (Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7).

The appointment of parent-elders is what distinguishes a self-governing church from just any grouping of believers. While the first transfer of *exousia* authority was from Jesus to apostolic teams; the second, and final, delegation is from the apostolic team to parent-elders who they appoint. It is at this point that a new work becomes a self-governing church. And it is worth clarifying again (and again) that both the apostolic team and parent-elders stand in Christ's authority; we do not have this authority in ourselves.

Apostles are responsible for identifying and releasing elders because not only is this a key transfer of authority, it is also the vital relationship. First, the Lord has given a detailed list of character requirements to assist in the appointment of elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7). Of course, this is not an official or clerical ordination; rather it is a simple yet profound affirmation of the parent-leaders emerging in the simple church – the apostolic team affirms what the spiritual family themselves witness. This outside, objective counsel serves to nullify any self-promoting agendas within a spiritual community. At this point the apostolic team may become a 'grand-parent' to the church while continuing as a 'parent' to the new spiritual parents of the simple church community.

The Bible then uses the term "**rule**" to stress the importance of a parent-elder's authority (1 Timothy 5:17); a strong word (Greek: *proistemi*) meaning, "to stand before," hence "to lead, to attend to," stressing care and diligence. As the Biblical picture associated with the elder is, of course, the shepherd and his flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) and since the church finds its life predominantly through communal life, an elder's primary role is to parent a community of believers, a simple/organic church.

Second, Paul instructed Timothy to "**let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour ... Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear**" (1 Timothy 5:17-22). This passage highlights two crucial issues: on the one hand, the government of the simple church is entrusted to the elders while, on the other hand, the elders remain mutually aligned to apostolic, relational (invited) authority. Thus the self-governing simple church stands on its own but is not alone.

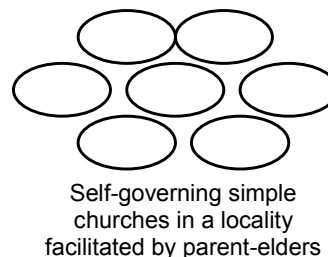
The relational health between apostolic teams and the elders they appoint is vital as spiritual families align to apostolic vision for Kingdom advance. Not only does it place the vital checks-and-balance in the Kingdom equation – both elders and apostolic teams mutually serve and support each other in integral relationships – self-governing simple church communities also stay connected to an apostolic (missional), Kingdom thrust.

While Topic 2 and 3 of this Part C will unpack these two concepts further, grasping these two core allocations of God-authorized leadership is vital. Of course – at the risk of sounding like a stuck record – they are not hierarchical positions; they function relationally through grace, spiritual maturity and mutual appreciation. But please do not miss the point: it is this servant-leadership wineskin that facilitates intentionality and multiplication. (I again ask you to please view the resource links below).

**Relationship between apostolic teams and elders ...**

	<b>Apostolic authority</b>	<b>Eldership rule</b>
Qualify?	Grace gift (Eph. 4:11)	Character/maturity (1Tim.3:1ff)
Role?	Pioneer, plant and serve	Parent (and mature) the family
Focus?	Extra-local and itinerant	Local and " <b>among</b> " (1 Pet. 5:2)
Goal?	Parent and multiply leaders	Parent and multiply believers
<i>Overlap and connection point...</i>		
	Sent out initially from elders (Act 16:1, 2 c. 1 Tim. 4:14)	Appointed by apostolic team (Act. 14:23; Tit. 1:5)

**DIAGRAM 22**



Servant apostolic teams who pioneer new ground while serving churches as invited



**DIAGRAM 23**

**Why are these two relational delegations of authority so important to grasp if we desire to see intentional Kingdom advance?**

**Next> Topic 1, Session 3: An Economic Base**

**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**

How does authority work? <Like father, like son>

What is an elder? <The good shepherd>

## PART C – PREPARING TO MULTIPLY

### Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

#### Topic 1 Kingdom Advance Session 3 *An Economic Base*

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#### Kingdom advance?

As we “prepare to multiply”, we now look at the last of three crucial areas that are vital for Kingdom advance in this first topic; without positively and responsibly engaging with them, multiplication is often beyond us.

Every Kingdom has three primary legs upon which it stands: a **relational** base, an **authority** base and an **economic** base.

- Without a relational base, a sense of legacy and responsibility, a kingdom deteriorates into **tyranny**.
- Without an authority base, a sense of order and accountability, a kingdom reverts to **anarchy**.
- Without an economic base, a sense of generosity and stewardship, a kingdom suffers **poverty**. *If a kingdom has no economic resource, even a strong authority and relational base will deliver little in terms of promise and potential; the kingdom can only merely exist, clutching at what could be.*

**“If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?”**  
(1 Corinthians 9:11)

#### An Economic Base

Alongside the subject of authority, the issue of finance foments some of the most vehement knee-jerk reactions from otherwise calm people. Again, the answer to abuse is not non-use but proper use.

While we all know the importance of giving, having felt frequently manipulated over the issue of finances and uncomfortably perturbed that so much ‘church money’ is spent on staff salaries, building and maintenance, many exploring simple/organic church throw the baby out with the bath water. Without question, too much teaching on financial giving has been used to prop up and finance an institutional construct of church. However, without an economic base, a sense of generosity and stewardship, a kingdom suffers **poverty**. To undergird the advancing Kingdom, we need a fresh grasp of generosity and stewardship.

As an apostolic worker, Paul spoke of his “right” to financial support: **“If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more”** (1 Corinthians 9:11, 12). And while he chose to initially forsake this right in the Corinthian situation – because of their immaturity – this was an exception not the rule. In fact, in both letters to the Corinthians, Paul then brought up the issue in order to urge the Corinthian believers to grow up concerning financial support of apostolic ministry.

Even though Paul occasionally laid down this “right” **someone still paid**; either he did or those who gave financially from another source. Paul had to make tents at times (Acts 18:3; 20:34); on other occasions, he “robbed” mature churches. He explained to the Corinthians: **“I robbed other churches, taking from them to minister to you ... what I lacked the brethren from Macedonia supplied”** (2 Corinthians 11:8, 9).

By stressing that he “robbed other churches” Paul urged the Corinthian believers to mature in their understanding of Biblical compensation. Their immaturity had placed too much responsibility on him or on “other churches,” alleviating themselves from their Biblical responsibility. They were enjoying an extended free ‘lunch’ while others were being *overextended*. Paul now appealed to the Corinthian believers to, like the Philippians in Macedonia, partner with him; that is, to **“share with him concerning giving and receiving”** (Philippians 4:15). This provisioning of apostolic vision plugs simple/organic churches into apostolic, Kingdom advance and is a New Testament act of worship to God: **“a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God”** (Philippians 4:17, 18).

While apostolic workers would be wise to consider “tent-making” options – so that they too can forgo this right when necessary – they are to give themselves to Kingdom advance knowing that **“the Lord commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel”** (1 Corinthians 9:14). Yes, this means the apostolic worker should **“reap materially”** where he has **“sown spiritually”** (1 Corinthians 9:11 c. Galatians 6:6). Maturing simple/organic church communities must consider the role they can play in sowing financially into apostolic workers as they spearhead the Great Commission.

While an apostolic worker’s desire to serve completely “no strings attached” may seem a noble intention, it is not a Biblical one. There ought to be “strings” attached; that is, God has established this “check-and-balance” equation where the giver and receiver are humbled and accountable in the grace of God. Mutual relationships are God’s self-selecting, testing ground in this regard. This keeps us all humble and interdependent.

Simple church communities should consider giving in a two-fold way. On the one hand, through **spontaneous** Spirit-led giving to the needy in their missional sphere of influence and in their spiritual family (1 Timothy 5:3-16; James 1:26, 27; 2:14-17). On the other hand, through **consistent** Spirit-led giving to the apostolic team and vision to whom they are aligned (2 Corinthians 11:8, 9; Philippians 4:10-20). How this is administered is something that each simple church community needs to work out for themselves so as to **“provide [all things] honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”** (2 Corinthians 8:20). (See the link below for a fuller unpacking of this issue and practical suggestions).

#### Together as a Kingdom community, how can you administrate spontaneous giving to the needy and consistent giving to apostolic vision?

Next> Topic 2, Apostolic Teams & Strategies

Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)  
What about financial giving? <For love or money>

**Why apostolic teams?**

(Please review “An Apostolic Wineskin,” p. 7 and “The Apostolic Connection,” pp. 13, 14)

In this topic we look at some of the functional aspects of apostolic teams. While, it is not the intent of this material to directly train apostolic teams, it is helpful for simple/organic church communities to understand some of the ways in which they function. Recall that by the term “apostolic team” we refer to a group of Ephesian 4:11 equippers working together to advance the Kingdom of God.

**“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers”**  
(Ephesians 4:11)

First, the New Testament underscores the importance of team ministry. Since community is the very essence of God’s nature, **leadership and ministry must be fleshed out in the context of team**. Even the Lone ranger had Tonto. The only one who flew solo was Superman! Paul always worked in the context of a team of Ephesians 4:11 equipping gifts. Note the frequency of Luke’s words “**they**” and “**them**” (or “**we**” and “**us**” when he joined up with them) in reference to Paul’s team in Acts 13:1-6,13,14,43,51; 14:1,3,6,7,12,14,18, 21,23,24-28; 15:2,3,4,12,22,30,35,36-41; 16:1-4,6-10,11-13,15-17,20,25,32,34,40; 17:1,10,14,15,16; 18:1,2,5,18; 19:22,29; 20:4,6,13,15,17,18; 21:1-7,10,15ff c. 2 Corinthians 2:12,13).

**The answer to everything is found in (1) Jesus and (2) team**. Yes, the order is crucial but don’t miss the importance of this statement. No matter what problem ambushes you; you will always find an answer, if you are anchored in Christ and armed with the resources of a team you trust.

A real-deal team is a **group of peers who have been joined by the Spirit**; who, through **mutual respect and shared life**, have **discovered the beauty** in each other and, while also **accepting the limitations** in each, **work together to accomplish in God what they alone could never achieve**. Secure in whom they are, each team member contributes and serves the others; willingly submitting to the leadership of the one best suited to lead in a given situation, humbly willing to lead should their gift-mix and experience require them to lead in the next. In this way, apostles work in team with other equipping gift ministries to represent the whole counsel of Christ.

While this concept of team ministry is, of course, important for both apostolic teams and parent-elders the key application here for simple/organic churches is this: even though your core relationship may be with one specific apostolic worker, receive the God-given equipping gifts with whom he works.

**What are some characteristics of apostolic teams?**

Let’s look at two defining characteristics of apostolic teams on this page and three on the next.

The Apostolic Goal (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Paul wrote, **“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:11, 12). The Greek word (*katartismos*) for “**equipping**” contains rich meaning and revelation in terms of the role that equipping gifts are to fulfil. Essentially the word means, “to render fit, complete.” In classical Greek it was used to describe the setting of a bone during surgery, and as this passage describes the “**body**” (vv. 12-16), we can begin to appreciate the importance of the equipping gifts to the church. **The equipping gifts enable believers to be established in Christ, correctly aligned in His Body, to fulfil their collective and individual destiny in advancing the Kingdom of God in the world.**

The key and rather obvious thought that must not be missed here is this: the goal of the equipping gifts is to equip believers **“for the work of ministry”**, not do all the ministry themselves! They exist only to the degree that they equip believers to further God’s cause.

The Apostolic Attitude (Philippians 1:1; James 1:1)

The apostolic attitude is characterized in Jesus’ own example: **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve”** (Mark 10:45). Apostolic teams are servant-teams that *serve* believers in finding and fulfilling their destiny to *serve* the Master’s vision in *servicing* the nations.

Jesus made it perfectly clear that our application of authority was to be very different from the world’s viewpoint. He said: **“You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them ... Yet it shall not be so among you ...”** (Mark 11:42, 43). True leadership derives its strength from a **relational basis of service** (servanthood) rather than a **structural basis of position** (control); **appealing** to the **internal conscience** of others through **relational integrity** rather than **imposing external conformity** through **hierarchical pressure**.

**Why is team so important?**

Next> Topic 2, Session 1 *Continued*

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### Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

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## Topic 2 Apostolic Teams & Strategies

### Session 1 *Apostolic Teams Continued*

#### Characteristics of an apostolic team?

While, it is not the intent of this material to directly train apostolic teams, it is helpful for simple/organic church communities to understand some of the characteristics of apostolic teams. We've already looked at the apostolic goal and attitude (p. 33). Let's now look at the apostolic perspective, heart and burden.

**"Receive [them] in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem"**  
(Philippians 2:29)

#### The Apostolic Perspective (Ephesians 4:13)

As we've noted, Jesus entrusted the Great Commission to apostles (Matthew 28:16-20). This mandate was to **"make disciples of the nations"** where the Greek word for **"nations"** (*ethnos*) means "people groups" not "countries". While this certainly implied that individual people would become disciples of the Lord, their perspective was to be of a corporate nature. They were to aim at discipling **"nations"** – in a corporate sense.

Paul explained that while each believer is a **"temple of the Holy Spirit"** (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20), we are also **corporately "the temple of God"** (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). And in Ephesians 4:13, he makes it clear what perspective the equipping gifts are to forge: **"till we come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". The corporate Christ is their aim!** Therefore, while this obviously implies the need to **"present every man perfect in Christ"** (Colossians 1:28), the perspective of the equipping gifts is on the corporate temple, the corporate vision, the corporate community and the corporate **"man"**.

#### The Apostolic Heart (Galatians 4:19; Romans 1:11)

The effectiveness of the equipping gifts is not in homiletics, charismatic personality or entrepreneurial skill; rather it lies in two words: heart **travail** and **impartation**.

Paul bears his soul in Galatians 4:19, **"My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you"**. In Paul's aim to see the corporate Christ **"formed"** in the Galatian churches, we catch a glimpse of his heart travail. The Greek word **"labour"** (*odino*) – **"travail"** [KJV] – means, "a birth pang, a labour pain," and it is used metaphorically of "spiritual birthing". **Travail is about carrying God's heart for others**. It is a heart consumed with the burden of the Lord for His purposes to be fulfilled. **Travail is first and foremost a lifestyle, a continual response to the Spirit of God**. In Paul's account of the trials he endured and the persecutions he suffered, he concludes with this bottom-line item: **"besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches"** (2 Corinthians 11:28).

The second key to apostolic effectiveness is found in Romans 1:11, when Paul writes, **"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established"**. The Greek word **"impart"** (*metadidomi*) means "to give a share of". It is therefore distinct from the word **"giving,"** although it is sometimes used in the context of giving to indicate generosity (see Romans 12:8). To **"impart"** refers to more than just giving something, **it means to give of oneself!** Impartation is depositing into others the investment of God-given grace. Paul said, **"affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us"** (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Impartation involves more than just the transfer of information, **but the infusion of spiritual life: "we ... impart ... our own lives"**.

#### The Apostolic Burden (1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 11:28)

Everything about apostolic ministry involves heart-wrenching, soul-draining and body-sapping hard work. Paul speaks of **"striving according to His working which works in me mightily"** (Colossians 1:29). The Holy Spirit described Barnabas and Paul's ministry as **"the work"** into which they were called (Acts 13:2). The great news is that despite this sacrificial lifestyle required, there is the corresponding **"grace"** to match: **"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly ... yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"** (1 Corinthians 15:10). Finding the crucial balance between sacrificial apostolic work and doing it in the grace of God is surely the most important aspect to lifelong fruitfulness.

Having an idea of the apostolic goal, attitude, perspective, heart and burden may help simple/organic churches better understand apostolic teams; I hope it provokes thought around how a Kingdom family can receive and support apostolic ministry. As Paul said: **"Receive [them] in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem"** (Philippians 2:29).

#### What can you and your simple church community do to honour and partner with an apostolic team?

Next> Topic 2, Session 2: *Apostolic Strategies*

Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)

How do we build teams ... that multiply? <A dream team>  
How do apostolic teams work? <The a-team>>

## PART C – PREPARING TO MULTIPLY

### Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

#### INDEX

Topic 2 has two sessions ...

Session 1 Apostolic Teams pp. 33, 34

**Session 2 Apostolic Strategies** pp. 35, 36

## Topic 2 Apostolic Teams & Strategies

### Session 2 *Apostolic Strategies*

#### How do apostolic teams work?

(Please review "An Apostolic Wineskin," p. 7 and "The Apostolic Connection," pp. 13, 14)

Paul referred to **"the weapons of our warfare"** (2 Corinthians 10:4). The word for "weapons" (Greek: *hoplon*) here means "instruments" referring to more than just the weapons themselves but specifically, *how they are used*. And the word "warfare" (Greek: *strateia*) is the word from which we derive the word "strategy". Written from Paul, who as an apostle refers to his "weapons of warfare", the phrase may be best understood as "apostolic strategies".

**"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thin that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"**  
(2 Corinthians 10:4, 5)

While there may be other assignments that apostolic teams embark upon, I'm going to stick narrowly to the lessons we learn from Paul and his apostolic team. It is clear from the New Testament that Paul understood Kingdom advance – the unpacking of the Great Commission – to mean the planting and serving of churches that became the beach-head for Kingdom exploits in their cities and regions. Let's look at how an apostolic team works.

#### 1. An apostolic team, led by the Spirit, penetrated a new people group.

As already mentioned, apostolic teams are commissioned to disciple cultural "people groups" – the Greek word **"nations"** (*ethnos*) is the word from which we get the word "ethnic". Thus, in seeking to penetrate Gentile people groups, we learn the following from Paul's team:

Firstly, Paul's emphasis was on a *region rather than city*; he targeted provinces not just towns.

For example, note the stress of Paul's thrust on the provincial region of Macedonia rather than directly to the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica or Berea (Acts 16: 9-12; 17:1, 10; c. 18:5; 19:22). Of course, his team penetrated these cities but it was in order to impact the entire regional "people group". Once they planted churches into a few key cities they moved on expecting the established churches to advance God's Kingdom in the region with apostolic life (see Romans 15:23, 24, where Paul plans to move onto Spain because *his* apostolic work in Achaia was done). Thus the first point here is that apostolic teams are to discern the region that they sense God is ear-marking.

Secondly, apostolic teams then target a city within the region under scope and seek to find the "access point" and **"son of peace"**.

Paul's general strategy was to start in the Jewish synagogue of a city – **"as his custom was"** (Acts 17:2) – his "access point". Every city, in which they worked, except two, had a definitive Jewish community (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4; 19:8). Unless Paul received specific leading to penetrate a city that did not have a synagogue, he aimed at cities with a synagogue and started his ministry there. Why? Simply because it was in the community of the synagogue that Paul usually found his **"son of peace"** (Luke 10:6); **a person or person(s) open to the messenger and his message**, who then becomes the "door-opener" to others. Once the "access point" and **"son of peace"** are found, the apostolic team can establish a beach-head of new converts, the nucleus of a new church.

Thirdly, the apostolic team then aims to first identify the finger-print of God in the people group they target before attempting to discern the strongholds, and the prevailing demonic principalities, that exploit the people they are reaching.

Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to discern whether the activity among the Gentiles at Antioch was a genuine work of God. He could so easily have brought his Jewish package with him and missed what the Lord was doing. Can you imagine if he brought Jerusalem's bias with him and cut across the unique work of God in Antioch? Instead, Barnabas was led by the Lord to discern the **"grace of God"** upon them ... to witness the fresh work God was doing in their setting and encourage them to **"continue with the Lord"** (Acts 11:23).

Finally, the apostolic team then seeks to *infiltrate* the people group, multiplying the missional vision.

Traditionally planting a church means renting a public meeting place and inviting people to attend a service of some sort. This "come to us" or *attractional* approach fosters a pastoral congregational model. In contrast an apostolic team's approach is *infiltrational*, seeking to incarnate the Gospel within the relational community the **"son of peace"** *already has*. Purity to this Kingdom-seed is vital if we're going to see Kingdom fruit. It is failing at this point that spawns so many empire-building initiatives.

#### How can your simple church community partner in prayer with an apostolic team? (See Ephesians 6:18-20 and 2 Thessalonians 3:1 for example)

Next> Topic 2, Session 2 Continued

**Topic 2** Apostolic Teams & Strategies  
**Session 2** *Apostolic Strategies Continued*

**How do apostolic teams work?**

**“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?”**  
(1 Thessalonians 2:19)

Paul referred to **“the weapons of our warfare”** (2 Corinthians 10:4). The Greek word for “weapons” (*hoplon*) means “instruments” and refers to *how the weapons are used*. The Greek word “warfare” (*strateia*) is the word from which we derive the word “strategy”. Written from Paul, who as an apostle refers to his “weapons of warfare”, the phrase may be best understood as “apostolic strategies”.

On the previous page (p. 35) we looked at the first step of an apostolic strategy: **An apostolic team, led by the Spirit, penetrated a new people group**. Let’s now outline the final three.

**2. The apostolic team sought to entrench new converts in the foundations of Christ; thus, nurturing a new self-governing community.**

A self-governing community requires, firstly, an essential grounding in Christ (Colossians 2:7) and, secondly, an essential connection to one another (Colossians 2:2). Paul was never merely satisfied with “decisions made” or even just individual disciples borne as the fruit of his labours. He always set out to birth a **community of disciples** ... always. For obvious reasons, a new community provides the necessary ingredients for new believers to grow but since Paul’s vision was for the Kingdom come, he knew that only a community alive (in the Spirit), in love (with one another) and active (in mission) could fully represent Christ to their world (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:27; 1 Timothy 3:15).

Paul was able to establish a community essentially dependent on Christ in a short period of time. You may recall on pp. 22-24 that we covered four **apostolic essentials** in answer to the question, “What are we building on?” These are the least, yet adequate apostolic investment required. An apostolic team’s astute use of the apostolic essentials will help a community thrive centred on Christ.

**3. The apostolic team appointed parent-elders to shepherd the new community.**

Paul’s team identified elders in the churches and appointed them as “overseers” of the new fledgling flock (Acts 14:21-23). **It is the heartbeat of apostolic teams to seek out, identify and release parent-elders** at which point their hands-on role becomes redundant. In order to achieve the goal of establishing a self-governing community that can stand complete in Christ without artificial props and man-made programs; an understanding of, what we call, the **apostolic process** is vital. Every group goes through three stages in achieving the goal of becoming self-governing and apostolic team’s would do well to have a good working knowledge of what we covered in answering the question, “Who are our sons?” (p. 26).

**4. The apostolic team continued to serve the elders and their communities as partners of Christ’s apostolic vision.**

On many occasions Paul returned to minister to the churches (Acts 14:22; 20:7-11) or to the elders themselves (Acts 20:17-38). He also sent members of his apostolic team to do so (Philippians 2:19-30). An apostolic team’s role is to both **plant** and **serve** churches; parenting the parent-elders – it also includes ensuring integrity of doctrine, character and values, and inspiring the churches to be engaged in the mission of Christ – advancing the Kingdom of God in their localities.

Importantly, the apostolic team’s authority is relationally-invited not hierarchically-imposed. Paul’s moving meeting with the Ephesian elders in Miletus underscores the importance and rich blessing of the mutual relationship between apostolic teams and the elders they partner with (Acts 20:17-38).

Jesus entrusted the Great Commission to **apostles** (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28). The Book of Acts records the **apostles** spearheading this Great Commission to the nations, and the epistles are instructions written to the church by **apostles**. We cannot fully appreciate a Kingdom-shaped church until we grasp an **apostolic mindset** of the New Testament. Again, this is not to over-emphasize the gift or function of apostle to the neglect of the other equipping gifts or the contribution of all believers. However, I hope these notes have helped to profile the role of the apostle and apostolic teams; something that the modern church at large has tended to under-value or even deny.

Paul captures the heart of apostolic ministry in this personal disclosure: **“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy”** (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20). The desire of apostolic ministry is to see others stand on their shoulders and go further; not camp in their shadows and be smaller.

**Do you feel you have a grasp of the role and value of apostolic teams?**

**Next> Topic 3, Biblical Eldership**

**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**

How do apostolic teams work? <The a-team>>

How do we build teams ... that multiply? <A dream team>

**What's the crying need today?**

**"The elders who are among you ... Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers ... being examples to the flock"**  
 (1 Peter 5:1-3)

What do you think is the crying need of our age? When Jesus looked out at the masses, He was moved with compassion for them, **"because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"** (Matthew 9:36). The crying need in Jesus' day remains the crying need of ours: **shepherd-hearted** leaders.

Jesus' statement was not a novel thought; through the Old Testament prophets we know that one of God's core grievances was with the irresponsible shepherds who neglected or abused His people. Through Ezekiel, God bellowed: **"Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? ... Behold, I am against the shepherds ...'"** (Ezekiel 34:2, 10). True to His gracious nature, in the wake of this repeated judgment, He also gave a recurring promise: **"I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding"** (Jeremiah 3:15). In my opinion, the huge emphasis on life-coaching, mentoring and counselling today is present only because we have a dearth of true shepherd-leaders.

**What is a shepherd-elder?**

Of course, in our Western world, the concept of the shepherd is largely lost on us. To the Hebrew mind, a shepherd was akin to a parent. And God's desire is always to be a **"father of the fatherless"**, to **"set the solitary into family"** (Psalm 68:5, 6). The crying need of our day is not first and foremost leaders with a fully orbed skill set and a toolbox full of gifts ... but parent-leaders who reveal the Father-heart of God.

To a Hebrew – and forgive the repetition – community was essentially family (not an organisation) and leadership fundamentally parenthood (not directorship). Thus, the word **"elder"** is essentially a parent-leader not a "member of a board of grumpy old men" or a position in the church hierarchy.

Peter used the words, **"elder," "shepherd"** and **"overseer"** to refer to the same person: **"The elders [presbuteros] who are among you ... Shepherd [poimen] the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers [episcopos] ... being examples to the flock"** (1 Peter 5:1-3). Paul did the same: **"he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders [presbuteros] of the church ... Therefore take heed ... to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [episcopos], to shepherd [poimen] the church..."** (Acts 20:17, 28).

Furthermore, the Greek word **"overseer"** (*episcopos*) is translated, rather unfortunately, **"bishop"** in 1 Timothy 3:1 (NKJV). Therefore these four words all refer to the same leadership role. One possible way to distinguish between these words is as follows:

elder	-	role	-	"who they are"
overseer (bishop)	-	function	-	"what they do"
shepherd	-	ministry	-	"how they do it"

The importance of this concept in the New Testament cannot be questioned. Once an apostolic team has birthed a new spiritual community, their intentional goal is to help nurture the new work into a self-governing family and essential to this aim is the identification and appointment of **"elders"** (Acts 14:21-23).

**Spiritual parents?**

In speaking to parent-elders, Paul and Peter both used the word **"among"** to refer to their role within close relationships in their spiritual family (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). This Greek word **"among"** (*en*) stresses **a close and fixed proximity of relationship**. Thus elders are leaders who serve as parents **"among"** – not "over" – their spiritual family. Elders are not a distant board of decision-makers removed from the close proximity of living **"among"** their people. Thus they are not directors who run programs for people to attend; they are parent-shepherds who tend to people themselves. As the wisdom writer urged: **"know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds"** (Proverbs 27:23).

Peter seems to underscore just this point. He reminds the elders to shepherd the flock not as **"lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock"** (1 Peter 5:3). The Greek word **"example"** (*typos*) refers to a mould or template: **a mould from which all else is shaped; a template from which all else is cut**. It is an unusually strong word speaking of the Christ-like character of the elder as a standard to be upheld for all believers. The question parent-elders should regularly ask of themselves is this: "If every believer lived like me, how would we be doing?" Leader, would you follow you?

We are exhorted to respect our parent-elders, **"considering the outcome of their conduct"** (Hebrews 13:7). Thus, elders live **"among"** their flock, "under observation" so to speak, so that the moral force of their Christ-like character provokes others to godliness. It is in these close, covenant relationships that the value of integrity is imprinted within the lives of each member of the church family.

**How different is a Biblical elder to the positional office in an institutional construct?**

**Next> Topic 3, Session 2: Kingdom Impact**

**Other resources on [www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com](http://www.crosswaveglobal.wordpress.com)**  
 What is an elder? <The good shepherd>

## PART C – PREPARING TO MULTIPLY

### Simply Church; Advancing His Kingdom

#### INDEX

#### Topic 3 has two sessions ...

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Session 3 Family Responsibilities p. 39

### Topic 3 Biblical Eldership

#### Session 2 *Kingdom Impact*

#### Giftng required?

The crying need in Jesus' day remains the crying need of our day: **shepherd-hearted** elders. When Jesus looked at the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, **"because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"** (Matthew 9:36).

**"Therefore take heed ... to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church..."**  
(Acts 20:28)

Eldership is *not* a spiritual gift that a few select people have, rather it is a leadership role that all can aspire to. In other words, every believer should nurture the holy desire to be entrusted with the privilege and responsibility of being a spiritual parent, regardless of their spiritual gifting or even their other ministry passions. Yes, an elder's spiritual gifts will determine and influence **how** they approach the overseeing of their flock but being an elder is *not* dependent on any spiritual gift mix. The defining qualifications for being an elder are all character-based (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9); even the phrase, **"able to teach"** (1 Timothy 3:2) does not refer to the gift to teach but refers to "the way a father instructs his son". Again, this stresses the necessity of a father's heart and mature character.

Though the word **"elder"** implies age, this must surely be understood in terms of spiritual maturity not natural years of age. The value of elders being married and having children contributes importantly towards life experience and maturity but is surely a guiding principle, rather than a binding law (1 Timothy 3:2, 4). Paul appointed elders within new church plants, leaning on relatively young believers to serve as elders. This does not negate the fact that an elder must not be **"a novice"** (1 Timothy 3:6), but does mean we ought to be open to all who **"set their heart on being an overseer"** (1 Timothy 3:1 NIV).

Another important lesson we derive from Paul's requirements for eldership is this: it takes an apostolic team to affirm and appoint elders (see Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). As mentioned, this provides a vital, outside (objective) check-and-balance in the equation. Elders are not self-appointed men who solicit "votes" in a self-promotion drive for leadership. Rather as a potential elder matures in a spiritual community and their parenthood becomes evident to all, one of the roles of an apostolic team is to affirm this and through the necessary process, appoint elders as these parent-leaders emerge in a spiritual family.

#### Impact in the world?

Again, being an elder is not a slot in some hierarchical ladder of an organisational system; rather **an elder is an investment of spiritual authority to advance the Kingdom of God in the world, because God's ekklesia is the chosen vehicle to redeem the world**. Elders are not just set apart by God to maintain a little group of "us four and no more," they are called to impact their neighbourhood!

An elder stands in Christ's authority to advance God's Kingdom in and through his spiritual family to the world. Leading their Kingdom family, they advance His cause in their collective, missional "sphere of influence" viewing lost people as **"sheep having no shepherd"** – seeking to lead them to the Great Shepherd of their souls.

It is therefore not surprising that Paul stresses that an elder **"must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil"** (1 Timothy 3:7). When we grasp that elders are vital in advancing God's Kingdom in their locality, we can appreciate that his **"testimony among those who are outside"** – unbelievers – is vital. The **"reproach"** and **"snare of the devil"** refers to two things: one, a lack of integrity gives the devil a place to personally exploit the elder since his role has spiritual consequences, and two, it affords the enemy the opportunity to stain the Lord's Name and discredit the testimony of His church.

Yet the greatest impact elders have is, without question, through nurturing and releasing others through spiritual parenthood. The goal and heart of parent-elders is to recognize the children **"born"** to them, to raise the **"sons given"** until they too become "fathers" able to be released as parent-leaders (Isaiah 9:6). An elder's desire is captured in the words of Jesus: **"the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do"** (John 14:12). In other words, "I give myself to see others go further than me!" Please review pp. 25, 26 on the **apostolic process**, "Who are our sons?"

#### What's the plurality of elders?

The New Testament always refers to "elders" in the plural; it never refers to "elder" singular. The concept of team is vital in every aspect of spiritual leadership, including the spiritual parenthood of a simple church. Thus we speak of the plurality of elders. While a simple/organic church may begin with a single elder (or eldership couple), as it grows other parent-elders will certainly emerge to help **"shepherd the flock"**. All we said concerning team earlier (p. 33) certainly applies here too. Furthermore, in growing networks of simple churches in a locality, the elders of these communities do well to work together for Kingdom advance as an expression of the Body of Christ.

#### Why are parent-elders vital in the advance of the Kingdom?

**Next> Topic 3, Session 3: Family Responsibilities**

**Topic 3** Biblical Eldership  
**Session 3** *Family Responsibilities*

**So what are an elder's responsibilities?**

The Bible does not compile a list of responsibilities for elders but as we have seen the words used to describe them are enormously helpful. A quick review:

elder	-	role	-	"who they are"
overseer	-	function	-	"what they do"
shepherd	-	ministry	-	"how they do it"

**"know the state of your flocks,  
and attend to your herds"**  
(Proverbs 27:23)

Elders oversee (lead, facilitate) a spiritual community as parent-shepherds. The gifts they have will influence how they do this, but the Biblical emphasis is on their **role** not their specific responsibilities. As spiritual parents, elders are to follow the leading of the Good Shepherd as they guide their Kingdom families **"in green pastures and beside still waters"** (Psalm 23:1, 2). The baseline that every elder ought to personally work from is, *"What would Father God have us do?"* and the reference point in decision-making then is, *"How would a healthy family respond to this?"* These two default settings will keep a simple church in green pastures.

One of the most important lessons a parent-leader must embrace is this: **we are responsible to people, not for people**. In other words, a parent-leader is responsible **to** reveal Father's heart through being an example to others; sharing from the treasure of his own relationship with God, he points others to Him who is all-sufficient. A parent-leader cannot and should not assume responsibility for another's life and decisions nor should he feel he has to shield others from the consequences of their choices.

Paul taught us to **"bear one another's burdens"** but urged that **"each one bear his own load"** (Galatians 6:2, 5). Distinguishing between bearing another's *burden* and urging them to bear their own *load* is a critical skill to harness. If we do not help people learn to take responsibility for their own lives, we are helping them to stay irresponsible; of course, as a parent, our compassion and support are vital to encourage others to grow in this. But forget this lesson and you'll burn out somewhere down the line.

**So what do elders do?**

In my experience, parent-elders do two things. Firstly, **elders facilitate a shared missional life**. As parent-leaders encourage a missional heart and facilitate the intersection of the family's individual lives together, the community learns what it means to truly **"dwell together in unity"** (Psalm 133:1). One of the great hindrances to a shared life is our individual busyness. While the elders need not live under the obligation of being the social planners of the group, they can encourage this intersection of lives by modelling and involving others in quick visits (pop over to bless and pray for each other; drop off a gift, flowers, freshly baked muffins, etc.), coffee catch-ups, remembering key events in people's lives, encouraging non-compulsory social get-togethers, reminding people of the career-related "big moments" others may have, profiling the involvement of those in prophetic causes and championing the discipleship groups of two or three, etc. etc.

Secondly, **elders facilitate regular participatory meetings**. As parent-elders involve and encourage all in learning to minister to God and one another in meeting together; giving space for the Presence of Jesus to touch, heal and empower all present, the family celebrates a high-water expression of their communal life – and these moments often catalyse further hunger for a missional, shared life together. This second point certainly is dependent on the first. A Kingdom family enjoying a communal, missional life will seldom struggle to experience God's life in their meetings. In fact, it will be the cherry-on-the-top of dwelling together. **"For there the Lord commanded the blessing – life forevermore"** (Psalm 133:3).

**How should we respond to an elder?**

The New Testament writers didn't give us the luxury of getting this wrong: **"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you"** (Hebrews 13:17 c. 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13).

First, notice the weight given to their parental role: to **"rule"** (*hegeomai*) is a strong word meaning, "to lead"; they are to watch out for those in their spiritual family and are to give account for **"those entrusted"** to them (1 Peter 5:2, 3 c. Acts 20:28).

Second, notice the weight given to our godly response to them: we're to be submissive and cooperative – not gullible but pliable – and to do what we can to make their role joyful. Again, it is simple when we remember the family context: *how ought one respond to a spiritual mom or dad?*

James' counsel is valid for each person in a healthy, thriving simple church family: **"wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy"** (James 3:17). As we all – parent-elders and the Kingdom families they lead – draw on God's wisdom, our simple church community will become an oasis of faith, hope and love in a world so void of each (see 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 8).

**How can you honour and serve the parent-elders in your simple church community?**

Next> Conclusion

**CONCLUSION** Why are you here?

When David arrived on the battlefield, he was asked, "What are you doing here?" His answer was something like: "I've brought some cheese and stuff?" (1 Samuel, Chapter 17). On hindsight we know that this was *not* the correct answer. To the question, "David, what are you doing here?" The answer was profound: "To slay a giant ... to deliver God's people!"

My question to you is the same: "What are you doing here? What are you *really* doing here?" The answer is not, "I'm here to pay the bills" or "I'm here to make it to the end of the month". And it is also not just being part of a small group of "us four and no more". No sir! You are here to slay a giant ... to enforce God's Kingdom rule! And from the "safe place" of a covenant family, you are to storm into His glorious future.

Why are you here? Why are you here at this time in human history?

**What is faith?**

When Jesus appeared to His disciples in Mark 16, He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart (v. 14). You can almost hear the crack of the whip! The very next verse does *not* read: "And they went to pray about it" or "They were sent for six months of therapy". No. Jesus rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, and then in the next breath, He said, "**Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature**" (v. 15)! Saddle up boys ... let's ride!

We have by and large misunderstood faith. Too many people think faith means that we need more knowledge ... we need more teaching ... we need more information ... Or that faith means first removing all the doubts, first clearing all the fears ... that faith means waiting for the storm clouds to clear ... that faith smoothes out all the lumps and bumps in our path ... that faith somehow removes the feelings of insignificance, insecurity and inadequacy. No!

The Bible teaches us that **faith is acting on what we do know**. Faith is obeying what God has revealed ... faith is using what bullets He has already put in our gun. Faith is moving forward through all the doubts, through all the fears ... faith means moving forward despite the weather conditions ... faith means marching forward straight over every lump and bump because God has spoken! Faith means boldly stepping into His intended future for us irrespective of the opposition. Yes, faith begins with the hearing of the Word but it is only consummated when we act on His Word.

We so easily misunderstand Romans 10:17. Paul wrote: "**faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**". So now we go on binges to hear more teaching ... we need more teaching ... more knowledge ... more information. This incorrect understanding foments believers who sit, soak and sour! Paul was referring to hearing the Gospel message of salvation. How can one come to faith in God? By hearing His "**word**" – the "**gospel**" of the Kingdom (c. vv. 16, 17)! Paul was exhorting the believers at Rome to be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel to those who were lost (see Romans 10:14-18), not encouraging over fed believers to have a fifth helping. So how can we grow our faith in God? By hearing **and obeying** His voice; and this happens only when we seek Him, not just another sermon.

**We increase our faith through obedience** (Luke 17:5-10). When we act on what God reveals, we prove His word true in our own experience and our capacity to trust God is further enlarged. No wonder James pleaded: "**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves**" (James 1:22).

**How do we respond to God's revealed will?**

There is a world of difference between **embracing** God's will **with expectation** and **accepting it with resignation**. To accept God's will as it unfolds with resignation is to agree to a slow death. To accept God's will with resignation is to say, "Okay, if it must be. Fine, if I have to". To do this is a sure recipe to allow bitterness into our hearts. There are many sincere believers who are doing God's will with a bitter spirit, not realizing that they have already set a date with disappointment. Before long, bitterness squeezes every bit of life from their souls and they wind up settling for less than God's best, or worse still, giving up altogether.

When we discern God's will – and it will always require change and forward movement – **we are to embrace it with expectation**. We are to embrace God's will with both hands and a whole heart saying, in the words of Mary, "**Let it be to me according to your word**" (Luke 1:38). This young teenager accepted God's will with earnest expectation, knowing that it would require a complete change of her entire life *and* that it would bring testing and persecution. Why? Because she saw the vision: she got a glimpse of God's intended future for her (vv. 31-33). If we camp in the present we will slide into the past; our future will disappear over the horizon. Camping in our "today" means that when "tomorrow" dawns we are stuck in our "yesterday". Let's pull up camp and charge into the opportunities God is presenting.

When is the best time to plant a tree?  
Twenty-five years ago.  
When is the second best time to plant a tree?  
TODAY!  
(Chinese proverb)