



Introduction

Originally I began writing these articles on Leadership, in 1987. At that time I was on staff in a large Church in Portland, Oregon. At the time I knew God was speaking to my heart about new understandings regarding the manner of carrying out leadership in the Church, but I had no idea where it would lead me.

As I initially wrote, I focused it on bringing adjustments to the leadership approach in the traditional/institutional Church. It was all I knew and all I saw at the time. As time went by, and the more I studied and wrote, two things became evident:

- 1) Traditional Church pastors were only going to be remotely interested in these principles because they do not sync with most of what they've been taught as leaders. Most, if not all, traditional pastors have been trained in "hierarchical" concepts of leadership, where authority is primarily invested in titles, positions, and offices, than in spiritual authority and reflecting the Word of the Lord. Their view of Church is that it is a place, a business, a corporation, and a building.
- 2) The only place these principles were going to work is a concept of Church that doesn't view itself as a business, with a CEO/Senior Pastor, with staff and salaries, tied to buildings, identified as a "place" rather than simply a "people." I.e. Something far closer to what was emerging in the House Church movement, and connected to the earliest beginnings of the early Church.

Therefore, I have completely rewritten these articles, from the perspective of position #2, and have left position #1 entirely. I do not see that the New Testament principles of Church leadership can possibly function in fullness in the Traditional/Institutional Church. There are just too many elements pitted against consistency of application there. For this reason I came out of that approach to Church, and am only able to teach these principles outside that system.

Since coming to these conclusions I have unwrapped the entire religious and institutional Church system, that prevails in most of Christianity, and have had to disconnect from historical Christianity, as a world religion, in favor of a small, simple, early Church model, of gathering the saints. It has set me free, and opened my understanding to things I'm certain I would never have seen had I not made the change.

Unfortunately, it has cost me an arena of ministry I was very familiar with, and found great enjoyment in ministering. Those whom I often ministered with, at home, and abroad, are confused as to what has actually happened to me, and it upsets them that I feel I am no longer able to minister in their Churches, preach from their pulpits, or assist in training their leadership. I am now so cross purposed to the approach they walk in, that for me to attempt to minister in those environments is to stir up controversy, become involved in divisions, and be labeled as a sower of discord. I do not feel this would honor the Lord or His Church, so I have come out of those ministry settings, and minister among those who are seeing the same things the Lord is showing me. It saddens my heart to no longer fit in their system of ministry, and I greatly miss the closeness of fellowship we once

shared, but because my first allegiance is to Jesus Christ, not my ministry, and not to satisfying their desires for me, I have had to make these changes. I look forward to that great day, when all our understandings are united in Christ, and we all see exactly what He sees.

I respect the integrity of my brethren, who reject the principles I've outlined in this work, and my conviction of a non-institutional approach to Church. We all see in part, and I look more to the Lord to bring about the needed changes, than to argumentation and conflict. For the most, they have my respect and admiration, for the task they have undertaken, and I believe they have taken up a form of ministry that will never satisfy the deep inner places of their hearts, as relate to leading His people, but ultimately it is Jesus' job to reveal this to them...not me.

Listen to Paul give to us the premier attitude, that should permeate our entire understanding of leadership in Christ's Church:

1 Cor 3:5 (NIV) What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? *Only servants*, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

Are you a leader? Can you say what Paul said, and have it really reflect your personal mindset about yourself? Only a servant? Or are you a CEO first and servant second? What a thought!

It is with a great sense of caution and yet concern that I venture out onto the waters of a very controversial area of Christian life. Perhaps no other single issue, facing the Church in our day, has been the source of what could be called the "*migratory pattern of the flock of Christ.*" We visit a local Church, enter the honeymoon of experience, get involved in its programs and life and then all too often slowly our confidence in the leadership of that Church erodes and we finally leave with an acrid taste in our mouths for their use of authority.

This pattern is repeated over and over again, from Church to Church. Every shepherd laments it, and every sheep is frustrated by it. Books, seminars, and lectures have been presented in this critical area, because it is a thorny problem that pricks most of us at one time or another. And yet the problem tenaciously hangs on. Why do people leave? How do we keep them within the fold? What is the problem?

I have been involved in Church life for over 40 years, and leadership of one form or another for 30+ of those years, so I have been around long enough to believe that I have seen the various forms of leadership that frame current Church life, in their many spectrums across America and around the world. And frankly I am more than concerned. And it is my concern and my experience that have brought me to a place of believing that it is time to express what I believe God is currently revealing to His Church in this critical area of Church life.

Perhaps one of the greatest dangers in putting a pen to this subject is the danger of reactionary expression. So I want to say from the outset that while I too have experienced negative forms of leadership, hopefully this presentation is not written out of the reaction of bitterness or unresolved offenses, nor is it written with the leadership failures of one Church or one person alone in mind. I cannot say there are not wounds that don't still hurt, but I suppose if, in a fallen world, where hurts take place, I was going to wait until all wounds had completely healed, then probably neither I nor any of us would ever venture into the dangerous terrains of writing on a subject like this. Actually, rather than writing out of a reactionary spirit, I believe it is joy that compels me to write. After all of these years I believe that a few elements of leadership are actually beginning to crystalize and the seeing of them brings a greater joy than at any time in the past. So it is with great joy that I embark on this journey and exploration of what I believe Jesus and the Apostles had in mind for the

Authority of Church leadership.

Because of my background as a Bible College teacher for 13 years and heading the original languages department of that college for those years, I will attempt to bring the original Koine Greek language skills that I have worked with, into this study. I do so with an awareness that a comprehension of the original languages does not guarantee accurate interpretation, but with the belief that honest involvement with the language of the New Testament can be of immense assistance in unraveling the various terminologies that Jesus and the apostles used in defining their concept of authority in the leadership of His Church.

If it be remembered that Jesus did not write in English, or whatever your native language might be, nor did the apostles, and that the purpose of almost every translation has been to use the fewest words to describe the meaning of the New Testament writers' thoughts, and the complex word meanings of the original languages lying behind our English translations, then this should help us to become open to the need for a deeper understanding of many of their words. When we recognize that for translators to attempt to fully express the breadth of meaning of each of the words of the writers, our Bibles would have been so large that we would have either needed a wheel barrow to carry around one Bible, or it would have been necessary to have given us a Bible in several volumes instead of just one. As such, the utilitarian approach won out, but in the process much was lost.

Now, while I do not desire to undermine anyone's confidence in the Bible they read and cherish, I will attempt to draw out, based on grammar, history and culture, what may perhaps be a fuller understanding of many of the words that surround our theme of authority in leadership. The choice of words that have been used by the Holy Spirit, for this topic, are rich in meaning, much of which is hidden beneath the surface, but which with a little digging can be surfaced, polished, and brought to what I hope will be a clearer understanding of His original intent.

I will build the presentation of our theme around the primary passages in the New Testament that speak directly to the authority vested in Church leadership. In this way I hope to create more of a biblical theology than simply a practical theology based on personal experience. In fact, when we come to such a delicate subject as authority in Church leadership, due to having interacted with many leaders over my years of Church life, I do not in anyway wish to expose the failings of any particular leader or Church. To do so would actually violate the very purpose of this study, that being to present the love of Christ expressed in gracious servant leadership. For me to attack the leaders I have labored with would be to perpetuate the very thing I long to see changed. The time of attack needs to come to an end, not only for me, but all who feel they have been wounded by Church leadership. We are not in competition with one another, as we build our Churches, we are building one Kingdom, and that Kingdom belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus.

To these ends I invite you to join me, as together we walk through the precarious valley of Church leadership and ascend a hill where Jesus' attitude and love brings joy and confidence back into the people of God, and lifts the stress and anxiety of those who are called to lead the body of Christ.