

Leadership Development Program

Module 8 – Leading in the apostolic



Apostles are people who are “sent out” on a mission which is the basic definition of the word “apostle”. Other meanings include “an ambassador of the gospel” and “officially a commissioner of Christ”. Apostles are people who are sent out from a body of God’s people to bring the kingdom to a new group of people. They also commission others into other roles in bringing the kingdom of heaven to earth. In this module, we will look at how to be apostolic and how to help those that we lead to become more apostolic.

What does it mean to be apostolic?

To be apostolic means that we bring an aspect of the kingdom of heaven to a group of people who are currently not experiencing the kingdom in that way. For some people that means changing the culture of a family, for others building a business that builds the kingdom or for others it means starting a community venture that brings the kingdom in some other way. This is more than just being evangelistic. It is about building a people group who build the kingdom.

Understanding the apostolic calling

Exodus 31:1-6 “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “See, I have **called** by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have **filled** him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. “And I, indeed I, have **appointed** with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you.’

It doesn’t matter what the Lord is asking us to do, there are always three aspects we ought to seek to understand. These three things are bolded in the preceding Scripture that concerns building the tabernacle.

1. **Our calling.** This answers the question of the “What?” Our calling is *what* the Lord has asked us to accomplish. We can begin to understand this by understanding what we are passionate about, what prophetic words say about what the Lord is asking us to do and what our spiritually minded family and friends say we should be doing.
2. **Our giftedness.** This is *how* we are “filled” by the Lord as referred to in the preceding passage from Exodus. This answers the question of the “How?” we fulfil our calling. We are gifted in different ways and we should understand our gifting so we go about doing the “what” in a manner consistent with our gifts. The gifts listed in Romans 12 are a good place to start. We

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may also want to read some of the recommended resources associated with this module to further understand the variety of gifts and strengths.

3. ***Our appointing.*** This is the answer to the questions of “Where?” and “Who?” of our calling. There are many different places and people where we can fulfil our gifts and calling. The Lord has plans for us to build the kingdom in certain places and with certain people so we should also be mindful of where we are influencing people. We can begin to understand our appointing by understanding the “where’ and “for whom” aspects of our prophetic words and spirit-driven desires.

As we are seeking to understand our calling, gifts and appointing, we should be aware of how they change. Not only should we be getting fresh understandings of our calling, gifts and appointing, but we should also be aware that there will be times when we are being shifted in one of three ways.

1. Our “*appointment*” can change abruptly. Usually through a combination of our own spiritual leadings, changing desires, prophetic words and opportunities, we are led by the Lord from one sphere of operation to another. In the preceding passage from the book of Exodus, the tabernacle workers were already gifted in their work and already called to be builders, it was simply a change of location and project for them. In these times, we ought to trust the Lord that we can leave the thing(s) we have been doing and will be provided for in the things He has asked us to do.
2. Our “*calling*” can go “upward”. Paul talks about the upward call of God in Philippians 3:14. Our calling is upward in the sense of its significance in the kingdom. When our calling goes “upward”, it does not negate what we have previously been called to do. When our calling goes upward, it is being broadened to influence a wider range of people. This does not necessarily mean that we are more prominent or overtly “successful”. Our upward call is normally built on our faithfulness of the previous version of our call. It relies on us changing and learning what we need to learn in that period to fulfil the upward call.
3. Our gifts can be *revealed* and can *develop*. We may have gifts in embryonic form that we need to be faithful in so the Lord gives us more. We may have gifts that we are not aware of that we try out to see what grace is in our lives. Romans 11:29 says that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” Our gifts are never taken away from us, so we should build them with confidence. Our calling is also never taken away, only broadened.

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Action Points

- *Take some time to review your calling, gifts and appointing with a coach or mentor*
- *Discuss any aspects that are currently changing*

Four things we need to know about apostles

1. *They are foundational to the church*

Ephesians 2:20 *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone”*

The preceding Scripture tells us that apostles, along with prophets form the foundation of the church. Jesus is the cornerstone of that foundation. He is the reference point by which the apostles, prophets and everyone else gets their orientation, but the apostles and prophets set the foundation. That means that other people build on what foundation they set.

2. *They are primary to the church*

1 Corinthians 12:28 *“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.*

Apostles break new ground and lay foundations, and so in any new kingdom venture they should be at work first. This does not mean that they are more important or should be held in greater honour. The Scripture clearly says that, in fact, we should give greater honour to those whose labour is not seen.

1 Corinthians 12:22-24 *“No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it”*

3. *They should equip the saints*

Ephesians 4: 11-12 *“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”*

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Just as pastors should equip people to be pastoral and evangelists should equip people to be evangelistic, apostles should equip people to be apostolic. We know that some pastors focus only on personal caring and some evangelists focus only on personal soul winning, but that is not what they are called to do. Similarly, an apostle should not merely focus on their own ground breaking, but also focus on equipping others to break ground. Because apostles are called to equip the saints, then every believer should consider what ground they are being called to break for the kingdom and how they are being equipped to do so.

4. *They should be doing signs, wonders and mighty deeds*

2 Corinthians 12:12 *“Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds”*

Apostles, like all the gifts, should have evidence of their gift. In particular the preceding Scripture says that an apostle should have signs, wonders and mighty deeds. Most people think of miracles and healings when they think of signs and wonders and deeds. However, Paul separates the gift of apostle with the worker of healings and workers of miracles in 1 Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12:29-30 *“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”*

So even though apostles may work healings and miracles, their signs, wonders and deeds might be different or broader than these things. This distinction between miracles (or healings) and signs and wonders is also reflected in other Scriptures (Hebrews 2:4, Acts 4:30, Acts 8:13)

The meaning of the words “sign”, “wonder” and “mighty deeds” that are in 2 Corinthians 12:12 is “indicator”, “prodigy” and “force”. These certainly can include healings and miracles, but should be broadened to include, amongst other things, indicators that these people are breaking the ground they are called to break. For example, Paul told the Corinthian church that even if he was “not an apostle to others” that they were “the seal of my apostleship in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 9:2). He considered this particular functioning church as enough of an indicator of his apostleship.

How do people become apostolic?

We know that Jesus selected the first twelve apostles and that the eleven remaining apostles cast lots to replace Judas in Acts chapter one. They chose Matthais who didn't seem to contribute very much. The Holy Spirit descended in Acts chapter two and even though many different people were used mightily by the Lord, the next people to be called apostles were Paul and Barnabas in Acts

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chapter fourteen (Acts 14:14). Before Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas were active in promoting the gospel and they were referred to many times, just not as apostles. Their journey to becoming referred to as apostles helps us to understand what it means to become more apostolic. Let's look at four aspects of Paul and Barnabas's journey.

1. *They were already committed and active in serving the Lord in the context of the church, and remained committed to doing so after they were named apostles.*

They were not seeking an apostleship nor proclaim themselves as apostles. They simply served where they could as they could. Their commitment to the other apostles did not change as a result of being recognised as apostles. Paul later talked about "false apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:13). There has always been self-proclaimed "apostles" who separate themselves. Whilst they may feel their "church" does not validate their legitimate apostolic works, the Bible is clear that those that separate themselves from a body of believers are prone to error.

1 John 2:19 *"They (antichrists) went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us."*

2. *They received revelation of their calling from the Holy Spirit through trusted people of God*

Acts 13:2 *"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.").*

We should be careful to examine the prophecies and words we receive. (1 Corinthians 14:29 *"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge."*). We ought to judge prophetic words by the word of God, the witness with our Spirit, wise counsellors and the track record of the person delivering the words. God is not bound to fulfil words delivered by well-meaning, yet unspiritual people. Paul and Barnabas just didn't get a good idea. Their new role was spoken by the Holy Spirit through trusted people of God.

3. *They were sent out*

Acts 13: 3 *"Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."*

There is a difference between going and being sent. This does not necessarily mean that we sit back and wait for someone to notice our calling or wait for them make our calling happen. However, we should always at least be prepared to lay out our plans to gifted spiritual overseers for their wisdom.

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We should seek the support, encouragement and spiritual empowerment from those whom the Lord has already empowered.

4. *They went out and built the kingdom of God in various ways*

Acts 19:8 *“And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.”*

We do not need to travel the world planting churches to be apostolic. We all have different callings to different spheres of life and so our apostolic ventures will look different to others. The key is for us to understand what ground the Lord has asked us to take and take each step before us.

Action Point

- *Where do you see yourself in points 1 to 4 above?*
- *Discuss these four points with a coach or mentor and address any point that is lacking in your experience*

How do we, as leaders, help others to become more apostolic?

1. *Pray for and promote personal revelation in your group*

As we covered in an earlier module, personal revelation is the basis of faith and should undergird our efforts. We can help the revelation in our group by praying for their personal revelation, as Paul prayed for the Ephesians. We can also have it as a focus of our group meetings, to seek the Lord together to see what He is telling us that we should be doing. We can also share our personal journey of revelation to inspire and instruct others. There are more thoughts about personal revelation in module 2

2. *Be personally apostolic*

Philippians 3:17 *“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.”*

As Paul outlined in the preceding Scripture, leaders set patterns for others to follow. The context of the Scripture is that Paul was specifically referring to following his calling. We also should be setting

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an example of following our calling, no matter whether we think it is particularly apostolic. The people that we lead can then see how we journey and gain confidence to make the decisions that they need to be able to progress in their journey.

3. *We have a continual focus on the apostolic in our team.*

1 Timothy 4:16 *“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”*

If the apostolic is permanently “on the radar”, then our conversation will consistently include issues relating to being apostolic. It is more important to be consistent than it is to have a less frequent, more intense focus. In meetings and in one-on-one conversations, we consistently bring up the topic of how we are progressing as individuals and as a team in breaking ground for the kingdom. We should tell stories about and celebrate people attempting to take new ground, whether or not their outcomes were considered “successful”. According to the preceding Scripture, it is as we *continue* in a focus that it will have effect on us and those we influence.

4. *Help our team understand their calling, gifts and appointing*

As discussed earlier in this module, people should seek an ongoing understanding of the what, how, where and for whom of their calling. We should be mindful of this for all those we lead, and especially mindful of how people in your team are called to break new ground. It is important that every person regularly refreshes their understanding of their calling. There are resources recommended in this module that will help people to further understand their gifts and calling.

5. *Expose our team to apostolic influences*

1 Corinthians 4:17 *“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”*

As we have covered, apostles should be equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. So, we should find ways to bring apostolic influence to our team – through personal contact, conferences, books, podcasts, blogs etc. If you are not particularly apostolic yourself, see if you can persuade a more apostolically oriented person to join your team. In the preceding Scripture, Paul extended his influence to the Corinthian church through Timothy. You will find extra resources on the apostolic through the stairwayleaders.com website.

6. *Provide coaching and mentoring in the apostolic*

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There are many different types of mentors, as we covered in an earlier module. There are likely people in your group who would benefit from mentoring from you or someone you know who has apostolic orientation. Encourage members in your group to seek mentors that would be helpful to them. There is also likely people in your group who your or others can coach to improve a particular skill. Ask your group what skill they would like to do better and who can, for a limited period of time, help them to develop that skill.

7. Help to connect your team solidly into the church

Being sent out does not mean becoming disconnected in relationships, community or accountability. The church's role (the church being all of us as a collective) is to build the kingdom. Being apostolic is one part of that mission and should be done with the understanding that we are being apostolic as a part of the church's function. Friendship, accountability, support and co-labouring with people of differing giftedness are all important, particularly as we focus our efforts outside existing communities in churches. None of the apostles in the New Testament removed themselves from relationship and accountability within the church. Nor should we.

8. Provide opportunities for people to receive prophetic impartation to confirm, encourage or direct their apostolic action

As Paul and Barnabas received prophetic direction for their apostolic activity, so we ought to do the same. The foundation of the church is through apostolic and prophetic action and people are rarely strongly gifted in both the prophetic and apostolic. What this means for apostolically gifted people is that they should form relationships with, partner with or seek opportunities to be influenced by prophetically gifted people. Apostolically gifted people should and do hear personally from the Lord, but since they are often taking risks that not only affect their own well-being, but also the well-being of other people, they ought to seek ask much confirmation as direction as is necessary for the decisions they are taking. In seeking confirmation of direction, they should consider that even though every believer can hear from the Lord, that there are differing levels of prophetic giftedness - from Ephesians chapter four prophets to the prophetic ability of all believers who can hear from the Lord.

9. We should provide opportunities for people to be commissioned

Apostles commission people for extending and building the kingdom so, as leaders, we ought to provide and promote opportunities for commission. This presupposes that we and others know

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what people are specifically called to do. So we should get to know the specific commissions of those we lead so we can help them to be released into those commissions.

10. Respect the diversity of apostolic endeavours

It is important to validate the diversity of expressions of apostolic calling, as every calling is uniquely designed by the Lord for unique individuals. The kingdom of God has had many different “flavours of the month” where particular gifts and callings are more validated than others. If we can validate and encourage people to follow their individual calling, we will see the kingdom advance in many different arenas. This is important for all people but particularly important for new leaders and those who are facing larger risks in their decision making.

11. We should resource apostolic ventures

This does not necessarily mean that we should help provide money for people to do what they are called to do. It can be counter-productive to provide too much for someone’s venture. However, we show what we really value by what we put our resources, including our money into. Our resources include our time, cash, possessions, our contacts and our energy.

Action Point

- ***Choose three of the eleven preceding points and develop a plan to increase your focus on the apostolic in your group by attending to that point.***