



DEVELOPING A
DISCIPLESHIP
CULTURE

A NEW WINESKIN

JOSEPH PERRY

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INTRODUCTION

Who is this book for? This book is mostly written to church leaders to help them get their churches unstuck and take them to the next level.

Most of the biggest challenges that churches face are merely symptoms or byproducts of not getting a handful of basic things right. Culture does not change overnight, but it can be changed. Culture changes from the top down with the leadership. This may seem difficult, but it can be done.

It is easy to blame our lack of success or poor church health on others, but you cannot change what you will not own. Pastors and church leaders must take ownership of the things that are out of alignment in their church. When we take ownership of the unhealthy or immature culture, we empower ourselves to change it. That is great news! If your church is struggling in some way, you have not failed. You are simply learning. We just need to keep learning.

HEALTHY IS SUCCESSFUL

As pastors, we want to know that our churches are successful. The problem is that the modern American church has adopted some very unbiblical metrics for determining the success of a church. These include numbers of attendees on Sunday (which today includes online viewership), number of programs the church offers, number of salvations, and annual tithes and offerings. You can have high numbers on all of these, including salvations, and still be a very unhealthy church.

Purpose and Vision determines what success looks like, and the metrics we use to measure progress. If we do not understand God's purpose and intention for the church, we will measure the wrong things and leave ourselves misinformed about our degree of success.

We need new metrics for our churches' progress. Ephesians 4:11-16 proves there is a progress and a goal that God has in mind: The maturity of Christ. Therefore, we must think in terms of a church's health. A church's level of health is its level of success. Church culture determines church health.

There are many components that go into making a church healthy and function well. The health of a church cannot be diagnosed merely by size. Many churches get unhealthier the more they grow. Numerical church growth should not be the focus, but rather a byproduct of a healthy culture. Therefore, we need new metrics, or ways to measure progress and health.

But new metrics cannot be arbitrarily chosen, but are almost realized based on a healthier, more biblical understanding of what a healthy church looks like.

The goal of this book is not to point church leaders back to the first century church: The Holy Spirit has already moved the church forward from there. God intends the church to grow up into the fullness of His maturity and their assignment. A word of caution: The church does not outgrow the Bible, nor change it, so as to leave the standard of Truth that has been established by it. We may experience progress, but not progressivism. The church does not move on from truth, but it does move forward in truth. This is what Jesus meant when He told the disciples, *“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot receive them now. But when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead you into all truth.”*

When we are led into all truth, it is not simply new understanding, but new experience. The wineskin changes from time to time. The wineskin is the container that the Holy Spirit gives us so that we may fully receive what Jesus wants to give us. Without it we cannot receive it or walk in it.

This book is about that biblical wineskin or container which enables us to create a true Discipleship Culture. This Discipleship Culture is based on the five leadership equipping gifts in Ephesians 4:11.

The passage from Ephesians 4:11-16 states that it is these five gifts that equip the saints for the work of the ministry, empowering them to grow up into the fullness of Christ’s maturity, and would keep them from being tossed around by various false doctrines. We can refer to this as a fivefold model. (While some hold to only a fourfold model, combining pastor and teacher, these are quite different gifts with distinct ways of thinking, graces, perspectives, functions, and value systems.)

This book is written to help churches move from operating in the old wineskin called a pastorate (one-gift ministry model) to operating in the new (fresh) wineskin of apostleship, which implies a multi-gift ministry model. Each gift cultivates different things in the church. Without the presence or influence of all five, the church is underdeveloped, the people underutilized, and will never reach the measure of Christ’s fullness. That is unhealthy.

But when we do embrace the new wineskin and build out this fivefold Discipleship Culture, all the equipping gifts will find their place in the church, pastors will receive an upgrade in their ministry and impact, and the fruit of the church is going to go to another level, and ultimately on to maturity.

So, I invite you to take this journey with me to see what this looks like, what the fruit of this kind of church is, and discover metrics that matter.

THE COMING APOSTOLIC CHURCH

The wineskin of the current church model is changing. Don't confuse the church with the wineskin. The church is tearing away from the current wineskin because it has become old.

The current wineskin cannot contain the new wine God wants to pour out. All wineskins have a government to them. God is moving the church from a pastoral (one-gift) government to an apostolic (multi-gift) government. That means that the church will not continue fractured and siloed in their "families" alone, but that church families will be gathered into tribes. Tribes are apostolic networks where churches are in relationship with each other based on a common spiritual DNA.

Churches that cannot make this shift will have difficulty as they try to use the old wineskin/model with which to receive the new wine.

What we have right now is essentially a 4-cylinder engine inside a Lamborghini. The new model is apostolic and will turn churches into Discipleship Equipping Centers. We may call these apostolic churches to describe the biblical fivefold model.

The frustrations that people experience with church and church life has very little to do with the church itself. The problem is the model. The new model or wineskin is going to be so satisfying because it will speak to the deepest part of who people are and what God has called them to.

The model is not "church" centric but "Kingdom" centric. This is going to break down all the divides church leaders have worked so tirelessly towards, and the people are going to live on assignment.

We are moving from a "Come and see" model to a "Go and show" model. The church's role is to export the Kingdom of God to the city. We have had it backwards for so long constantly trying to convince people to attend our churches. But if export the Kingdom, we will import souls.

Good services may create "church" growth, but only Kingdom work creates Kingdom growth. We have gotten good at growing the church, but not at growing the Kingdom. But while the old model of growing church attendance has worked for a while it will not long continue.

Everything is about to change.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PASTORS?

This “change-in-wineskin” message for pastors means that where they have been doing as one person the work of five, a tremendous burden is going to be lifted off of them, and they will focus specifically on being themselves and operating within their unique gifting.

Pastors, teachers, evangelists, and even prophets have had constraints on the expression of the grace on their lives because the paradigm/wineskin they have operated within has not allowed for them to be fully themselves. Without the full expression, the people remain underdeveloped as well.

Now, they will break out of those constraints and will flourish within an apostolic/Kingdom context. For those who embrace what God is bringing, pastoral burnout will become a thing of the past. The new wineskin will show to church leaders just how good the good news really is. The “good news” is not just for unbelievers anymore.

THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF A DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE

The five core components of a Discipleship Culture are the five equipping gifts of apostle, prophet, teacher, pastor, and evangelist. We will explore some of what each one provides to the church.

CHAPTER TWO DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE: APOSTLES

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES DO NOT FIGHT FOR VICTORY

The Bible states that we have been seated with Christ in heavenly places, and that Christ is seated far above all rule and authority. Therefore, we are seated with Christ in victory. This changes the way spiritual warfare is conducted by the believer. Much of the church has been taught that we are under an onslaught from the enemy; that the enemy has the upper hand. But this could not be further from the truth. Christ has already disarmed the principalities and powers and has seated us with Him. Therefore, the church does not fight for victory but from it.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES HAVE ACCESS TO ALL FIVE EQUIPPING MINISTRIES

Apostolic leaders ensure that churches are being equipped and somewhat led by all five equipping gifts discussed in Ephesians 4. These are not gifts that people possess. Rather, certain individuals are these gifts and these people-gifts are given to the church for their equipping. That some people are the gifts is demonstrated by the fact they each one has a different lens, value system, perspective, and grace that they impart to the church.

Most churches are built upon only one of them, which are always referred to as the pastor. This can be misleading, too, since many pastors are actually teachers or evangelists in the pulpit. But the point is that all five are needed for the church, and each congregation in particular to reach maturity.

Most churches will not have all five gifts in their church among their leadership. But that is not necessary. The important thing is that they have access to all five gifts and are connected through some sort of relationship.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES ARE EQUIPPING & TRAINING CENTERS

The Ephesians 4 gifts are equipping ministries. They provide believers with the tools they need for life and their assignment, and the training in application. For too long churches have become about the service, often called “doing Sundays.” This has led to believers taking a passive role in their development where they listen to a talk and are encouraged to live it out in the world. This is part of it, but equippers have taken to merely doing the work rather than equipping the church to do the work of the ministry as Paul writes in Ephesians 4.

With some training and guidance, churches can make the transition to actually equipping believers with the tools they need to walk out building each other up. Imagine an interactive church that involves more than just giving, singing, and the raising of hands. Implement equipping and training activities in your churches and watch the excitement and participation go through the roof.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES ARE SENDING CHURCHES

The current model of the church has been all about gathering together. This is important, and we must continue to do it. Pastors are anointed for this, to bring people together in a community, and equip them to take care of each other. But the reason we gather must take on a different dimension.

Believers in apostolic churches gather to be equipped and sent out on assignment. Every believer has an assignment from the Lord. It is in churches where we often find our team with whom we will be working. Gathering people is about connecting them with God, giving them what they need, and sending them back out the door to change the world around them.

When we do not send out people on their assignment they get bored with church. People are looking for purpose and want to make a difference. People do not need permission to leave, they need to be commissioned to go. When people are sent apostolically, they go in the grace of the leadership to create change by bringing the Kingdom.

APOSTOLIC CHURCH LIVE ON ASSIGNMENT

While not everyone is called to be an apostle, everyone is called to be apostolic. “Apostle” means “sent one.” Apostle was the term used for the Roman general whom Caesar would send out to newly conquered territories where he would eventually go himself. The Roman apostle’s role was to bring the culture of Rome to the new territory in preparation of Caesar’s arrival.

In the same way, Jesus has apostles that He sends out to bring the culture of heaven to earth everywhere they go. Apostles are equippers who equip the church to go out and transform culture fulfilling the apostolic prayer Jesus gave the twelve that Heaven would come to Earth, and God’s will would be done.

Living on assignment is a big shift from where we are as Christians. The average believer thinks about going to church, being kind, maybe telling someone about Jesus occasionally, and finally retiring. But people who belong to apostolic churches live on assignment. They exist to please and serve God. They understand that they have a mission that is a part of the Great Commission to disciple nations. Their time, money, and energy are sown into this. They are always trying to learn more, and get better trained and equipped, so that they may fulfill their purpose, complete their mission, and see the Lord get the reward for His suffering.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES FOCUS ON THE KINGDOM, NOT JUST THE CHURCH

The church and the Kingdom are not the same thing. The church is in the Kingdom, but it is not the whole Kingdom. The Kingdom of God existed before the church was birthed. It is the realm of God, an extension of the very presence of Jesus. That is why wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Everywhere we take Jesus, freedom is created for others.

When our focus is the church, the focus becomes only about our church, and what God is doing there. The Kingdom is about the bigger picture of what God is doing. Jesus only said what He heard the Father say and only did what He saw the Father do. That is how we were meant to live.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES EXIST TO RAISE UP LEADERS, NOT FOLLOWERS

The problem with raising up followers is that it keeps believers in infancy: They never fully grow up, but instead remain dependent on the leadership. In the family, good parenting is when children grow up, learn how to take care of themselves, move out, and thrive. If the kids are still home when they are forty, then the parents did not properly equip them.

When church leaders do not fulfill the role of equipping the believers, then they remain forever dependent upon the pastor. They do not know how to manage themselves, hear God for themselves, or serve others. It is the job of equippers to create leaders, those who know how to lead themselves, becoming mature believers, and then how to lead others.

When Christians first come to the faith, they are like newborns, needing to be spoon-fed the truth. But over time they must graduate from milk to solid food because they have been given opportunities to grow and develop. The result is those who take responsibility for their own growth and for leading others.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES EXIST TO TRANSFORM CULTURE

Darkness reigns in every place the church has not taken the Gospel of the Kingdom. When King Jesus comes to an area, everything changes. People get saved, corruption is eliminated, marriages and families are restored, businesses thrive, and the economy is healed. But for these things to happen will require more than someone preaching on a street corner or holding services down the street.

The church, the community of Christians living in that city, are the transforming agents sent there to bring heaven to earth. Whenever the Kingdom comes to town everything out of alignment with it must come into alignment.

The reason we do not usually see this is because even when we do take the Gospel out of the churches, we do not take it into the institutions. Taking the Gospel to work is not necessarily the same thing as engaging the institution with the truth of the Word of God. The truth does not just set your soul free from hell and sin, it sets your government free from corruption, your family free from brokenness, and your business free from poor performance. The church is God's agent of change.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES DO NOT USE PEOPLE TO BUILD THEIR MINISTRY

True apostolic churches do not use people to build their ministries, they use their ministries to build people. They understand that they do not exist to be served, but to serve the people. They do not exist to serve people as in a church “service.” The senior leaders are the ones who are laying down their lives for the sake of the people, to build them up and empower them for life and ministry.

When planting a church, the mindset is that you are taking several years to lay a foundation upon which the church will be established. But if you do it right, you will discover that you are the foundation that is being laid upon which the church is being built. While apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church with Christ as the Cornerstone, anyone who undertakes the true planting of a church will find themselves laying down their life for this to happen.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES ARE 95% OR MORE VOLUNTEER BASED (LESS THAN 5% OF CHURCH IS STAFF)

This is not a hard and fast rule. The point is that the bulk of what the church does should be volunteer-based, and namely because most of its work should not be in the church, but outside it. We have been building the church rather than focusing on the Kingdom. The goal is not to get rid of buildings and programs unless that is somehow impeding the work of the Kingdom. The problem is not even all the money that goes into the upkeep of facilities and staff salaries. That kind of thinking typically comes out of a poverty mindset that begins with what we do not have and this idea of a scarcity of resources. It is really about the focus of the work. What are we giving our attention to?

The main reason churches should not try to endlessly grow their staff and programs is because most people are not called to serve in churches, but in the marketplace. The mistake is thinking the only way people can do the work of the ministry is by serving as ushers, greeters, children’s ministry workers, etc. Most of the work of the ministry happens outside the church, and the leaders’ job is to equip them for that.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES DO NOT FOCUS ON GOING TO HEAVEN

The focus of these churches is not going to Heaven, but on bringing Heaven to Earth. Much of the church has adopted escapist theology that just wants to check out and be with Jesus. This causes the church to disengage from the world and from their assignment.

But the church’s mandate requires them to go where things are dark so they can bring the light. Jesus taught His disciples to pray that Heaven would come to Earth. Every time we bring a

heavenly solution to a worldly problem, Heaven has come to Earth. Things shift. The atmosphere changes.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES WALK IN THE SUPERNATURAL

Apostolic churches do not make excuses for powerlessness. Miracles and the supernatural should be the norm for the believer. But this does not happen because we said God can use me however He wants. It does not happen without being very intentional about how we follow Him. God is supernatural. He is beyond our natural world. It is not enough to say that a baby being born is a miracle, or a person getting saved is a miracle. These are both good things, but they are what we settle for when we do not want to believe God for the supernatural that is beyond us.

Are we growing in faith? Is our faith being stretched? If we are comfortable with everything that God does, then we are not following Him closely enough. We need to follow Him into the unknown. We kid ourselves when we believe that we have a handle on God. If we feel like we have a handle on Him, that we have solved every mystery of who He is and what He does, then it is because we have reduced God to our image of Him and have stopped following Him. If we follow Him, He will take us into the unknown.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES ARE JUST AS INTERESTED IN MONDAYS AS THEY ARE SUNDAYS

Sundays are for the church to come together, to experience biblical fellowship, to be trained and equipped for the work of the ministry. The problem is that we have the wrong idea of the work of the ministry. The work of the ministry for most Christians is not being a pastor, Sunday School teacher, usher, deacon, worship leader, or children's pastor. For most believers, the work of the ministry is outside the church. It takes place Monday through Saturday. When you leave church, you are entering the mission field: No airplane required.

Sundays are to get you ready for Mondays. To the average church leader, everyone is drowning. But in an apostolic church, the believer sees that those who are drowning are in the world. Obviously, all Christians struggle with major life issues at times. But if we always treat the church like the walking wounded, then they will never become the soldiers that they are. They have an assignment and must be seen and sent as such.

For the apostolic church, Monday is likely more exciting than Sunday. Sunday is where the church regroups and reconnects collectively with the family of God. But on Monday this family is going to change the world. Sundays are for sharing about the exploits of God in the world: How Jesus healed this one, mended that couple's marriage, saved this person's son, and helped this person's business thrive. The good news we have been given to share with the world is a lot better when it comes out of an apostolic church, because the Gospel is not just for salvation anymore, but for the healing of whole nations.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES DO NOT BASE THEIR UNITY ON AGREEMENT

Apostolic Churches highly value unity in the Body of Christ, but they do not base it on shared activities such as joint worship services or community projects, but on the unity that exists in the Spirit. Christians too often look for practical ways to measure their unity. Unity can be expressed many ways, but there is a mindset that says we are divided simply because we worship in different buildings. It is a good idea for pastors to build relationships with each other, but we should understand that we are all one Body even when we do not do that.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES ARE GENEROUS

In the Kingdom, we understand that we have access to all things. Whatever we need as a resource, for life and godliness, or for assignment, we have. That means our theology and thinking must always begin with what we have, not what we do not have. In the Kingdom there is more than enough. God is the God of overabundance. Apostolic churches do not preach a materialistic prosperity gospel, but they do not preach a poverty gospel either. They preach that God supplies for our every need, and resources us for every assignment.

Apostolic churches realize that God has blessed us and made us a blessing so that we can bless others. Generosity overflows to others. They look for ways to give of their money, their time, and their general service. They are the public demonstration on the earth of God's generosity.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES CULTIVATE PEOPLE'S IDENTITIES

There is a mindset that says you die and disappear when you receive Christ; that somehow, because He is your life, you are not really there, as if you were worthless before, and God got rid of the bad stuff so he could do His work in and through you. This is bad theology.

Apostolic church leaders recognize who you are; that you are unique, that God loves you. They see past your faults and spiritual immaturity to who you truly are, and they work to call that out and cultivate who you are to the surface. God is not afraid of you showing up: He made you to show up. Apostolic church leaders know this. They do not want you to be like them: They want to help you be fully yourself.

CHAPTER THREE DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE: PROPHETS

APOSTOLIC PROPHETS

Modern New Testament prophets are most effective in apostolic churches. Prophets are equippers. They equip believers with ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying. They do this by teaching them how God speaks, how to discern His voice, how to understand what He is saying to the believer, and how to effectively communicate it to others, especially when it is for the church.

Prophets have a grace on their life to do this. This grace tends to make it easier for prophets to hear God than most believers so they can help the church grow in that. The prophet's job is not to make the church dependent on the prophet, but to help make them more dependent on the Holy Spirit.

FROM PROPHECY TO PROPHETIC

Prophecy is not just the words in the Bible about the future. The gift of prophecy in the New Testament is about hearing what God wants to say to someone and sharing that with them. It edifies, exhorts, and comforts people. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 14 to desire spiritual gifts, but "especially" that you may prophesy because it builds up the church.

However, the prophet's role is not to merely help the church pursue the gift of prophecy, but to help them become prophetic. A prophetic church is a church that knows what is on the heart of God, both what He is saying and what He is doing. This is how Jesus lived, only saying what the Father said, and only doing what He saw Him do.

This requires a present-tense relationship with the Father through the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not just read the Old Testament (Bible), memorize the words and principles found in it, and do them. He often did the opposite of what it said because He saw the Father operating out of love, such as not condemning the woman caught in adultery to a stoning. At times, Jesus would choose to heal only one man out of a needy crowd. Why? Because He only saw the Father healing that one man.

Being prophetic is about living like Jesus did, being led by the Spirit, and not by our natural senses, or even the needs of others. It is about living by the current word God is speaking. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." "Proceeds" is present-tense and requires a living relationship and a hearing ear.

Prophets do not encourage people away from the Bible but encourage believers to hear from the Holy Spirit and ensure that what they are hearing lines up with the Scriptures. Jesus

said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” Prophetic churches build their lives on the Scriptures but follow the Holy Spirit. They know they are following the Holy Spirit because it lines up with the Scriptures.

THE POWER OF YOUR WORDS

Prophets teach the power of our words, good or bad. When Isaac was tricked into blessing Jacob instead of Esau, Esau became angry. There were no witnesses, nothing physical was exchanged, and no contracts were signed. Yet Isaac was not able to retract his words. Why? Because our words have power. Isaac had blessed Jacob, not just with what he currently had, but with future blessings that would come because of his words.

Prophets train believers to tame their tongue so they release life and not death; To come into agreement with what God is saying; To know when to partner with Him by declaring it, and when to hold it close in intercession.

CHURCHES THAT EDIFY

The gift of prophecy is not about exposing sins and shortcomings, nor revealing those things to other people. Believers especially often know their own sins and shortcomings that they struggle with. The gift of prophecy is to give believers a tool by which they may build each other up and on to maturity. Prophecy is about having God’s insight about who He created each person to be and calling that to the surface. It’s not about telling them who they could be if they just tried harder, but who they already are, so that they forsake the weights and sin that are keeping them from living healthy, fruitful, godly lives.

A church that calls each other up instead of calling each other out will do very well. The gift of prophecy does not contradict the need for accountability. Accountability is necessary in relationship. But prophecy helps us to know, not only the heart of God for others, but to know them truly after the spirit and not after the flesh.

BREAKING OFF THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT

There is a difference between having a relationship with Jesus and simply having religion. But it is not just one or the other. There tend to be degrees of religion, or a religious spirit, mixed in how we serve the Lord. The religious spirit is largely that form of godliness that has no power in it to transform a heart. It is not motivated by love for God or the person. One of its chief characteristics is zeal, yet without love. James speaks of pure and undefiled religion. But there was enough of a religious spirit even in his day that he had to make a distinction between them.

The prophetic has to do with the word of the Lord, and it will offend the religious spirit in people every time. God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways are higher or better

than ours. So, when He speaks, it often offends what we are thinking or doing when we hear the word of the Lord. To see the religious spirit in action one has only to look at the religious leaders of Jesus' day, constantly offended by what He said or did. We think we are immune to this, that He could not offend us, but that is because we think that we already think like He thinks, see like He sees, and love like He loves.

In some ways, the Christian life is a series of continual breakings away from the religious spirit and embracing love from a sincere heart.

CHAPTER FOUR DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE: TEACHERS

APOSTOLIC TEACHERS

Apostolic teachers have a grace on their life which enables them to impart to the church a love for the truth. This love for the truth keeps believers from being deceived or deceiving themselves about what the truth is. When you love the truth, you intimately seek it to know it. Therefore, it becomes easy to recognize those things that are not of the truth.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day did not love the truth or know it. Jesus told them, *[It is] “. . . because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me.”* (John 8:45, ESV) When someone does not love the truth, he will not recognize it even when he hears it.

Loving the truth implies that you actively seek it. This certainly includes the Scriptures but does not end with the Scriptures. Jesus told the religious leaders, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.” (John 5:39, ESV)

Teachers highlight the truth of the Scriptures and yet encourage people to know the Person of Truth, Jesus. Only in knowing Him personally will we arrive at Truth, and not merely the Bible.

HOLDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

While apostolic churches have ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying, they do not elevate what they are hearing above the Scriptures. The Bible remains the standard for establishing all doctrine. They know, like Paul, the difference between the Word of God and their opinion (1 Cor.7:10, 12). They live by every word that proceeds (present tense) out of the mouth of God, but they compare that to the written Word.

The Scriptures do not become less relevant or powerful to apostolic churches, but more relevant and more powerful. This is because, not only is it true, but they believe that God is still doing every good and powerful thing they read in it.

LEARNING FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

Like other fivefold equippers, teachers do not teach in a way that keeps people dependent upon them. Rather, they equip people to learn from the Holy Spirit. The Bible is not the teacher, Jesus is our Teacher. The Bible is the textbook. The Holy Spirit is the One sent to lead us into all truth. Knowing truth means not mere mental ascent but experiencing and walking in the truth.

Learning from the Holy Spirit does not happen in our heads as much as in our spirit or heart. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. If you want head knowledge, you can gather that up all day in your head. But the goal of learning is to arrive at the truth, and the Holy Spirit helps us get there.

Our churches must be places where people learn how to learn from the Holy Spirit Himself. This kind of thing often begins when we are new believers listening to the pastor's sermon. They hear him say something and somehow know it is true, even though they have never heard it before. That is because the Holy Spirit is teaching them to discern what is true from what is false. Apostolic churches are led by the Spirit. That includes everyone, not just the leadership.

A LEARNING CULTURE

True discipleship means being a lifelong learner. It never stops, but we must always be learning from God and through His Word what it means to follow Him and fully embody His Word in our hearts and lives. Transformation is a process which takes place through repentance. Repentance means changing the way you think, but at a heart level. We so internalize the newly received truth in such a way that it changes how we approach something. Because God's thoughts are higher than ours concerning everything, we never grow out of the need for greater and deeper repentance.

Advocating for the need to read only the Bible, and not other books, is to not understand how the Holy Spirit teaches us. The Bible is and will remain the standard of truth. But it does not teach us about everything. When we study other books on various topics, we give God something new to talk to us about. We realize that He does not only want to talk to us about the condition of our heart, but about leadership and management, architecture, botany, societal infrastructures, music and art, government, sociology, and so forth.

The apostolic church understands the need for the pursuit of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Proverbs 3 tells us to never let these things go. The better we get properly educated, the more we empower ourselves to bring the Kingdom of God to earth.

DISCIPLESHIP IS PARAMOUNT

No one disagrees that churches should be making disciples. The problem is that disciple-making has been left to the leadership alone. The mentality that says, "Who better to make disciples than the leaders who know the most?" But discipleship is not the job of the leadership alone. The very act of teaching someone else what you are learning increase the rate of speed and quality of what you are learning.

The Three Levels of Learning anything, to truly know it, require you to Learn it (acquire knowledge), Live it (practice what you are learning), and Lead it (teach someone what you are learning).

The goal is not to wait until you have it down to start teaching someone what you are learning. Trying to explain something to someone helps you realize how well you know it, or do not. It speeds up the learning process.

DISCIPLESHIP IS MULTI-GENERATIONAL

Disciple-making is multigenerational. Not merely that you teach your children and they teach their children, but that we make disciples who make disciples. This is phraseology that churches use today, but do not have a system in place to do it.

The faulty mentality from both sides concerning disciple-making is that it takes a long time before new disciples can start making disciples; that for new believers to mature “enough” to teach what they have learned will take them at least a few years. Most never do. Therefore, we leave disciple-making up to the pastor or leadership.

Church leaders are thinking that we do not want to promote a novice as a teacher. That’s true. But we do want to encourage even new believers to share what they are learning with other people outside the church. All they need is the right tool to facilitate their disciple-making. The best tool for that is The Go Book, part of The Go Book Discipleship System which I use in my consulting.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE: PASTORS

When Jesus was asked about the Greatest Commandment, He mentioned two: Love God and love people. The two do not work without each other. If you really love God, you will love others. How we treat others, God takes personally.

The pastoral approach to discipleship has to do with making truth practical and equipping others with the tools to manage healthy relationships. This includes marriage, honoring parents, raising children, working with others, loving strangers, etc.

You can think you are as spiritual as you want to based on the biblical knowledge you have acquired over the years. But all the truth in the world does not mean a thing if you do not practice it in your relationships. This is one of the reasons that a man who cannot manage his household should not be leading the household of God. If you are not putting it into practice in your home, then you are not ready to lead in the church.

Apostolic churches place a high value on healthy relationships. They practice the “one-another’s” of Scripture. They are quick to repent to each other and quick to forgive.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND CORRECTION IN THE CHURCH

While there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ, there is also no excusing sin. Sin must be dealt with. Paul addressed the Corinthian church for not dealing with someone practicing a sin that was hurting the church. The church was letting it go on. Paul instructed them to put the person out because they were a believer but were practicing things that was not even normal in the world.

Apostolic churches practice Matthew 18, to go to your brother first to show him his fault. If that does not work, the next step is to take someone with you as an impartial third party to ensure the truth of what has happened is arrived at. Paul addressed that final stage when he said it was time to put the brother out of the church, to break fellowship with him. Why put him out of the church? Because when you do, you separate that person from the fellowship of the church, and the blessing and protection of God. This is what Paul means when he talks about handing someone over to Satan. The purpose is not to lose the person, but so that they will find repentance and return.

Apostolic churches have restoration as one of their chief values. When we get ourselves in a mess, we need someone to love us and talk to us about it, bring help when needed, and make the hard choice of separation for the benefit of the offender in those rare instances. Apostolic churches remember, it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

GOD LIVING AMONG US

One of the reasons these churches place such a high value on relationships is because they want God in their midst. In many churches, we seek what is often called a visitation of God. We want God to show up and radically transform everything and everybody. We want to feel His presence when we come together. But God is not as interested in providing us with a visitation but habitation.

We can cry out for visitations from God, He will show up because He loves us. But there is a difference between God living in us and God living among us. For God to be among us requires two or more people living in a healthy relationship with God at the center. The more our relationships are surrendered to God, the more He dwells among us. This is what the pastoral gift and grace is given to do in the church.

TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES

Healthy churches look after those in their care. Being apostolic, they focus on the mission each one fulfills outside the church, but never at the neglect of the community. Pastoral leadership ensures that everyone is fed and cared for; that there is a place for each one.

By apostolic standards, the church is an equipping and training center. But by family standards it is a living room.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES ARE NOT HOSPITALS

Because believers are waking up to the new wineskin the Holy Spirit is leading us into, the current model is leaving believers with the impression that the current wineskin of the church makes it simply a hospital. The main reason this perception exists is because many church leaders see most believers as always drowning. Therefore, the church's role is to provide them with as many life preservers and band aids as possible. The church is supposed to minister help and healing to the broken, but that is not its only function.

There is some truth to the church-as-hospital perception based on how the church is currently operating, but that speaks to function and perception and not its nature. The church is not a hospital even if it is currently only operating at that level. It just needs to rise above that. Churches must always be places where people find help, healing, deliverance, and a sense of belonging. But these things do not make it a hospital. The church simply needs to grow into maturity, both as individuals, and corporately as an equipping center.

APOSTOLIC CHURCHES ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR LOVE

The church should be known for its love rather than its great Sunday services or programs. It should be known by its love even more than great music or teaching. I used to think

that the world will know that we belong to Jesus by our love for them. But that is not what He said. Jesus said the world will know that you are Mine by the way you love one another. Why is that? Because when the world sees how we love another, they want to be a part of that kind of community.

When parents love each other, it creates a safe space in which their child can grow up. They feel loved and cared for. The same thing happens in the church. Love walked out in healthy relationships creates a safe space that even the lost want to be a part of long before they even know the Lord.

CHAPTER SIX DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE: EVANGELISTS

MORE SOULS

The apostolic church cares about souls. It is the evangelist that imparts a love for the lost. All equippers can teach on the importance of leading people to Jesus, but evangelists have a grace on their life for it that they impart to the church. They make you want to. It does not feel like an obligation but a privilege. This is not because they are good salesmen, but because they have a grace on their life which is supernatural: They supernaturally help us see and receive God's heart for others.

ABLE TO RESPOND

These churches are equipped to know how to communicate with the lost; that people are different and have different needs at different times. Some need an answer, others need a hug. Some need to be told God loves them, others need prayer, and others to feel like they belong somewhere.

They know there is no one-size-fits-all evangelism method, because it is not about method, and yet they work to be able to help people with what they need on their journey in seeking truth.

EXPORTING THE CULTURE

The apostolic church is equipped by apostles, prophets, teachers, and pastors. Their gifts create a certain culture there, along with the ministry of the evangelists. Relationships are healthy and valued. The believers have ears to hear. They are grounded in the Word of God. They even do the works that Jesus did. But evangelists are the ones that keep believers thinking about those who are not yet a part of the community; those who do not know Jesus, His love, compassion, forgiveness, or this new life available only in Him. These fully equipped churches do not keep this good news and the testimonies of their community all to themselves. They export them to the lost. They share testimonies so that others will know that God wants to do it for them, too.

CONCLUSION

Moses acknowledged before God that the greatest distinction between the people of God and all other nations was His Presence among them. All the other nations worshiped gods of wood, stone, and metal. The ultimate purpose of developing a Discipleship Culture is so that we can be equipped to grow up in the healthiest, most powerful relationship with God possible; that He would live among us in a way that it changes the world around.

What we have discussed is simply a few of the basic attributes of what a church with a true Discipleship Culture looks like. The only way to achieve that is to put in the work to build that culture based on the five dimensions of the fivefold equipping gifts.

Ephesians 4 tells us when we have all these components together, the church will be fully equipped and grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Without all five components, we cannot say our church is either healthy or fully mature. In the absence of such gifts we are stunting the growth of the believers. For too long we have continued planting churches and operating on an old, one-gift ministry model. Pastors are burning out, churches are dying, believers are not thriving in their purpose, marketplace ministries are not being rightly validated, souls are being lost, and nations are not being disciplined. When the church again acknowledges, connects with, and reintegrates apostolic and fivefold leadership, we will see our impact go through the ceiling.

To say that our churches have a true Discipleship Culture without having a fivefold strategy to equip the believers means we simply do not understand what each Ephesians 4 gift brings to the table. God gave five gifts to provide what we needed. It is not simply the function of each gift that is needed, but also the grace that comes with each gift. Each grace determines how each equipper thinks, how they see, and what they value, and therefore, emphasize, most. It is extremely difficult, if not nearly impossible, for equippers to think differently than the way God wired them, on their own.

Even if your church has all of them, if you do not understand the distinctions of each grace, how they work together, and in what order of priority and why, you cannot establish a healthy Discipleship Culture in your church.

To help bring all these pieces together, God provides to the church apostolic leadership. They do not just equip believers, but cultivate the grace on each equipper, helping them apprehend and fully embrace who they are. As they learn how each one thinks and sees, and what each one values and emphasizes, they will understand more of who they are and are not, thus eliminating friction and frustration, and empowering them for teamwork to equip the church for true maturity and mission.

Despite where you feel like your church is at in the process, there is hope. Having a firm grasp of the fivefold equipping gifts, and an implementation strategy, is paramount to the

process. Typically, we just need some guidance along the way. With the right help, your church can be on its way to possessing a true Discipleship Culture.

QUESTIONS

Now that we know a little better where God wants to take us, the next step to getting there is by asking good questions. Here are some questions we need to start asking ourselves:

- Is my church in a Pastoral (one-gift) Model or an Apostolic (Fivefold) Model?
- Do I know how to position my church to become the new wineskin that we may become the new container able to receive and hold what God is about to pour out?
- Do we already have the tools to turn new believers into disciple-makers?
- Do we have a true Discipleship Culture at our church based on the Fivefold Gifts?
- Do the people in the church make disciples, or only the leaders?
- Is God living among us, or only in us?
- Does our church truly value the Word of God and the Spirit of God, or do we elevate one over the other?

THREE THINGS FOR BUILDING A DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE

If you want to develop a true Discipleship Culture in your church, you will need three things:

1. To take a Five-Dimensional approach based on the Fivefold Leadership Gifts
2. The right tools to help your people become disciple-makers and take disciple-making multigenerational.
3. A guide to walk you through the process.

If you would like help developing a Discipleship Culture in your church, accessing the tools you need, and receiving a framework to bring this all together, reach out to me and I will be happy to help. And be sure to look for my forthcoming book on the fivefold equipping gifts, and how bringing them together again is going to change everything.

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