**The Church**

*New Life's Ecclesiology*

* Part V: New Testament Church Leadership
  + Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, Preachers, Elders, and Deacons
* The Holy Spirit of God and Jesus is the leader of the local and international church
  + But men and women in churches tend to take over this leadership role
* Church defined: a local gathering of confessing Christians where…
  + The Holy Spirit is present (in individuals and corporately)
  + The Word of God honored and accepted
  + God is worshipped
  + Discipleship of Jesus is encouraged
  + Historical orthodoxy and orthopraxy is respected
* The *mission* of the Church
  + Salvation; discipleship; holiness; worship and Presence experienced; intercession; teaching the Word; service
* The *task* of Church leaders
  + To help the Church fulfill her mission
  + To develop the next generation of leaders
* The *challenge* to church leaders – find ways to let the Holy Spirit lead the church and stay out of His way
* The New Testament Church model:
  + Local congregations
  + Led by local leaders
  + Connected to other like-minded churches by apostolic and prophetic leadership
  + In loose, relationship-based networks
  + There was no official institution and no leadership hierarchy
* Church leadership in the *New Testament* had the “offices” or leadership positions of:
  + Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, Elders, Deacons
* Church leadership at present has:
  + Popes, Archbishops; Cardinals; Bishops; Patriarchs; Priests; Presidents of Conventions
  + Local priests, administrators, evangelists, preachers, pastors, elders, deacons
* Apostles, prophets, evangelists are not recognized as “offices” per se in mainline denominations
  + Evangelists are accepted in Baptist denominations
  + Apostles and prophets areaccepted in Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations
* Christ-following leaders must above all be *servant* leaders
* Matt. 20:25-28
* But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave…”
* New Testament Church “offices” should be thought of more as verbs, rather than nouns or titles
  + Pastoring; eldering; deaconing; prophesying; evangelizing, etc.
  + If the ministry work of the office is getting done, then a person is fact in the “office” or position of authority
  + If the ministry work of the office is not getting done, then the “office” is just a meaningless title that simply produces pride
* *Spiritual Gifts* vs. *Offices*
  + All believers have the Holy Spirit
  + The Holy Spirit is a Person, not just a power, or force
  + A Christian cannot have “part” of the Holy Spirit—he/she gets all of the Spirit
* We all have the potential to operate in all the gifts at different times
  + But the Spirit tends to give us one, two, or three gifts that we “major” in
  + Why? We each contribute our part of the body (hands, feet, etc.) in cooperation with others
  + We are compelled by the Spirit to rely on each other
* I Cor. 12:18
* But in fact, God has arranged the members of the body, every one of them, according to His design.
* There is no one person in the Church who is like a “new Jesus” – the “Head”
  + Jesus in the “Chosen” – He truly was the Son of God

* John 3:34
* “For He whom God has sent (Jesus) speaks the words of God; for He gives Him the Spirit *without measure.”*
* Every believer in church history combines to make the Body of Christ
  + We all play a small, but crucial role
* Jesus explained to his disciples that it was geographically strategic for Him to leave and then send the Holy Spirit to the church
* John 16:7-8; 13
* "But I tell you the truth, it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you...when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth."
* The physical Jesus could not have been in Israel, Europe, Africa, Australia throughout church history
  + The Holy Spirit in His believers, in His body can be
* The gifts of the Spirit verses (I Corinthians chapters 12 and 14; Romans 12:6-8)
* The gifts of the Spirit are distributed to believers who can:
  + Counsel with wisdom and knowledge (in spiritual matters)
  + Have extraordinary faith
  + Heal the sick
  + Perform miracles
  + Preach/teach
  + Discern good and evil spirits
  + Speak in tongues/ interpret tongues
  + Prophecy
  + Oversee groups of churches (apostles)
  + Serve (deacons, administrators)
  + Evangelize the lost
* The difference between spiritual gifts and talents
  + They may overlap; may not
* Talents result in worldly, physical success—not requiring the supernatural
* Spiritual gifts result in supernatural things happening
  + If the gift of evangelism: people get saved
  + If the gift of teaching: God-only-revealing spiritual insight is imparted
  + If the gift of healing: people get healed who are not healed through natural means
  + If deliverance; people get delivered from demonic oppression
  + My example: teaching, administration
    - Not evangelism; not deliverance
* Our early-in-our-Christian-life task? Find out what our gift(s) is(are)!
* How do we discover our spiritual gift?
  + Ask ourself: "what would I like to do in the Church?"
  + Ask God, "what would you like me to do?"
  + Then listen to other believers who may tell us what they think our gift is
  + Once we get a sense of what our gift is, get up the courage and *try using it*
  + If there is spiritual success, “fruit” – we have very likely found our gift
* More about Church *offices*
* Eph. 4: 11-13
* And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to *equip the saints for works of ministry* and to build up the body of Christ, *until we all reach unity* in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, as we *mature* to the full measure of the stature of Christ.
* A person with a spiritual gift that is recognized by the Spirit and Spirit-filled Christians may be called to serve in a leadership role in the Church
  + People in the role, or office, of “teaching,” “evangelist,” “prophecy” have operated in the “gift” of teaching, evangelism, prophecy etc. successfully
  + They are then recognized by God and other believers as successful in ministering the gift
  + They are “promoted,” so to speak, to a wider role
    - Ministering to a larger group of Christians
    - In teaching and mentoring others about the gift
* Leaders are first recognized in their own church
  + Then, perhaps, in other churches or in a region
  + Examples:
  + Evangelists: Billy Graham, Billy Sunday
  + Teachers: Greg Laurie, Charles Stanley, David Jeremiah, Chuck Swindoll; Tony Evans
  + Prophets: Rick Joiner; Jonathan Cahn
  + Apostles: Charlie Milbrodt; David Nelson (CCI)
  + The elders, teachers, volunteer ministry leaders (deacon-equivalents) at New Life
* Everyone who claims to be a believer in Jesus has been commissioned to be a witness
  + And to testify what the Lord has done for them

* This “commission” differs from the “gifts” and the “offices”
  + Just because we do not have the “gift” of evangelism, we are not excused from the responsibility of testifying to others what the Lord has done for us
* Matthew 28:19-20
* Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have *commanded* you
* Acts 10:42
* And He *commanded* us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the One appointed by God to judge the living and the dead.
* What makes churches grow?
  + Good teaching?
  + Good worship?
  + Good fellowship?
  + Nice facilities?
* Churches that grow have congregations who testify to others about Jesus and invite them to church
  + Churches that do not grow do not have such congregations
* Gifts, offices; inside-church-wall ministry:
  + Is good, but our operating in them can falsely give us excuses to justify our not carrying out our commission
* The Church is the only organization on earth that can offer the supernatural—the intervention of God into difficult, impossible situations
  + There are plenty of good groups on earth that solve natural, medical, physical world problems
  + Governments, social organizations, corporations, United Way, SPCA, Walmart, doctors, lawyers, bankers
  + The Church contributing to social good is a noble thing
* BUT--ideally the Church should concentrate on doing what *only* she can do:
  + Save souls
  + Help folks grow as disciples of Jesus
  + Bring supernatural intervention into circumstance
  + Champion forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, the fruit of the Spirit (not offense, war, partisanship, revenge)
  + Intercede before the throne of God for the lost and the hurting
* Just because every time we pray or witness there is not an answer or a salvation, does not mean that the spiritual gifts and the supernatural does not work
  + God is always at work behind the scenes
  + Situations often gradually, and not dramatically, improve
  + This is war…a struggle…a battle to overcome evil
* I John 3:8b
* For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might *destroy* (eventually) the works of the devil.
* Recall the parable of the persistent widow and the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8)
* The New Testament model of leadership:
* The early mission trips of the apostle Paul featured:
  + Paul and his companions travelled to cities in Asia Minor and the Mediterranean where they found people who they trusted to lead home groups
  + They placed these trusted individuals (including women – Priscilla, Lydia, Phoebe) in leadership over these small congregations
  + They came back later to visit and check on the groups
  + They sometime sent others to visit
  + They communicated by letters
* First century churches were autonomous
  + They were locally governed
  + They shared teachers and finances
  + They had a common confession of faith
  + They submitted voluntarily to the apostolic oversight of Paul and others
  + They were assisted by prophets (Acts. 21:10), teachers (Acts 18:24); evangelists (Acts 21:8)
* Acts 14:21-23
* They preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith.
* Spiritual gifts and leadership calling on individuals was confirmed by the apostolic and local leadership
* I Tim. 4:14
* Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given you through the prophecy spoken over you at the laying on of the hands of the elders
* The early churches recognized Paul’s authority, but not as a Pope or denominational president
  + Some even resisted and questioned his authority (II Cor 11)
  + The churches were “networked’ with the apostles and prophets providing support
  + Resources were shared
* The form of church government that evolved was quite effective
* Acts 17:6
* “These men who have turned the world upside down have now come here!”
* Until mid-300 AD most churches had 50 or less members; the largest had less than 150 members
* When Christianity was no longer persecuted and became the official religion of Rome, things changed
  + There was increasing institutionalization
  + There was increasing politicization
  + There was increasing corruption
  + Men and bureaucracies governed the Church--not the Holy Spirit
* The Catholic Church in 869 AD decreed that there was no distinction between a “soul” and a “spirit” in our minds
  + The medieval church then proceeded in the Inquisition to war on individuals who encounter the spirit world--be it witches or true Christian mystics and reformers
  + This began the process of modernizing and "un-supernaturalizing" the church
* The Bible was kept out of the hands of the laity
* An edict from the Council of Toulouse (1229 AD)
* "We prohibit the permission of the books of the Old and New Testament to laymen, except perhaps they might desire to have the Psalter, or some Breviary for the divine service."
* Fortunately, the Holy Spirit in the Church has been slowly rescuing the people of God from corrupt self-serving, ineffective clergy and ecclesiastic hierarchies
  + And has been enlightening us to the recovery of the New Testament servant leadership model
* The Protestant Reformation placed the *Word* of God back into the hands of the people of God
* The Second Reformation we are currently experiencing
  + Placing the *work* of God in the hands of the people of God
  + With servant leaders working predominately as teachers and equippers of their congregations
* Despite this, the Modern Church – Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant denominations still:
  + View their leaders and pastors as their (not God's) employees
  + Have a leadership hierarchy of trained professionals who do the work of the ministry for their congregations
  + Rely heavily on human wisdom and control
  + Draw minimally on divine input *(from their prophetic folk)* in their leadership selection and decisions-making
  + Experience little of the supernatural
  + And develop theologies to fit their experience
    - “The Holy Spirit does not do these things anymore”
* How good a job has organized religion done to kept our nation and country moral and righteous?
* How well has organized religion pushed back against the culture’s paganism? (*with its being ashamed of the Bible, its approval of child sacrifice, sodomy and immorality?)*
* Indeed, much of denominational organized Christianity has *embraced* a modern, scientific, anti-supernatural worldview
  + Has rejected the authority of the Bible
  + And has accepted our increasingly paganized society’s immorality, perversion, and abortions
* Church leadership consistent with New Testament teaching is challenged to *not* build an ecclesiastic hierarchy or establish rigid rules applying to the practice of the Faith, but to create an *atmosphere* that allows the believer to:
  + Corporately behold the Lord in worship and prayer ("King David's temple")
  + To be taught by the Spirit from the Bible in its context:
    - An ancient, Jewish, supernatural worldview (the "synagogue")
  + To learn to personally hear His voice (“My sheep hear my voice”)
  + To be healed by Him
  + Invite others to appreciate, glorify, and enjoy Him
* In future sermons we will look specifically at church offices describe in the New Testament—*are they all still needed today?* 
  + The Apostle
  + The Prophet
  + The Pastor
  + The Elder
  + The Deacon
  + The Teacher
  + The Evangelist