

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a critical focus point of modern society. The more people-intensive an institution is, the more important leadership becomes (Malan, 1997: 127).

The Bible is the perfect case study in leadership. Both Old and New Testaments provide excellent models of leaders and leadership, for example Moses, Esther, Nehemiah and David (Old Testament) and Peter and Paul (New Testament).

Then there is the ultimate and timeless truth of the leader of all leaders, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He did not teach a leadership theory, but demonstrated it as a way of living and serving (Heintz, 2000:2). After his ascension, Christ also gave his church a leadership structure involving leadership diversity through the five varied ministries that characterised his life on earth. These are commonly known as the five-fold ministry.

This article will focus firstly on the concept of the five-fold ministry, secondly on the apostolic office in that five-fold ministry, and thirdly on the concept and application of servant leadership in the modern church.

## DEFINITIONS

**Leader:** A **person**, who influences **people** to accomplish a **purpose** (WTB, 1989: PD6). In the church set up, a leader is a **Spirit filled and called person** who influences **God's people** to achieve a **biblical purpose**.

**Leadership:** The dynamic process through which a person, the leader, influences people to achieve the set purpose or purposes.

**Ministry:** The work of God for the people of God; serving others, using the gifts, resources, and power that God gives His people. It belongs to everyone in the body of Christ. All believers have been gifted in some way to carry out the work of God (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Co 12) and therefore all believers are 'ministers'.

**Five-fold ministry:** The diversity of **main leadership ministries** described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:11-13:

- *<sup>11</sup>It was He [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to prepare God's people for works of service [ministry], so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup>until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (NIV).*

# 1 THE FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY

When Jesus Christ gave his Great Commission (Mat 28:19; Mark 16:15) to the Eleven, He, being God, knew perfectly well the extent of purpose his words implied. He knew His followership would grow as his universal body (representatives) despite the opposition of the Satan (the adversary). In that sense the question of unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God demanded **effective leadership**. To this purpose He personally mentored the Eleven to lay the foundation and for the continuation of which He himself gave his five-fold embodiment to his beloved followership.

Ephesians 4:1-16 provides the basic principles for building the ecclesiae of followers or believers that became known as the church (Prince). Whereas the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11 are supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit within the believer, **the five ministry gifts to the ecclesiae Ephesians 4:11 describes, were set amongst them by Jesus Christ and are a continuation of his person and ministry.**

## Three dimensions of leadership

The **person dimension** of leadership amongst the believers is seated in the five main leadership or 'Jesus ministries' or 'post-ascension ministries':

- **Apostle** - one sent forth for a special task.
- **Prophet** – one who “speaks forth” a special message revealed to him or her by God for a specific time and place.
- **Evangelist** – one who “tells the good news” of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- **Pastor** – also designated as bishop, elder and shepherd. ‘Shepherd’ is indeed the descriptive name of this ministry.
- **Teacher** – one who interprets Scripture and teaches it to the believers.

The **people dimension** is found in the expression *God's people* (NIV) or *saints* (NKJV).

Lastly, the **purpose dimension** lies in the two main functions and three ultimate goals of the five-fold ministry (Prince):

### > Main functions:

1. To equip or prepare the believers for their works of service (or ministry).
2. To build up the total followership of Christ.

Bible expositors who use the King James translation tend to divide these functions into three, following the translation fault in verse 12 of that version (e.g. Hagin, 1996:1): “*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*”

Greek texts (Marshall, 1993:563) show that the comma after the word 'saints' should not be

there. The literal translation reads: “...for the perfecting of the saints to [the] work of ministry.”

> Ultimate goals:

1. Unity of faith through the acknowledging of Christ.
2. Maturity of all believers, individually and collectively.
3. The capacity to completely represent Christ in person and ministry.

### **Church leadership paganised**

When Roman emperor Constantine transformed the Christian faith into the state religion during the fourth century it in fact started the paganisation of the church (Wegerle, 1994: 21). The **five-fold ministry was the first to be attacked** and slowly apostles, prophets and teachers began to be replaced by bishops, presbyters and deacons. Pastors were replaced with priests.

This purposeful elimination of the five-fold leadership ministry reflects a common tactic to weaken groups. Simply remove effective leadership and a group is rendered ineffective.

### **Denying the five-fold ministry in the modern church**

Many church leaders and theologians declare that the offices of apostle and prophet, and sometimes the teacher no longer have a place. As far as prophets are concerned, critics declare that the maturity of the church (Ephesians 4: 13) has already been attained. They quote 1 Co 13:8, which states that prophecy will cease when the perfect comes, reasoning that the perfect has already come with the completion of the canon. Prophecy is no longer needed and has ceased (Vlach, 2000:5). Interestingly, the same Scripture reads that when perfection comes, knowledge will also disappear. On this the critics remain silent.

### **The universal and local church**

It is important to understand that there is a ‘universal’ church, which is the whole followership of Christ (Mat 16:18). The ‘local’ church is that part of the universal church resident in any locality (Mat 18:17).

### **Mobile and resident ministries**

Four of the five-fold ministry seem to be ‘mobile’ ministries to the universal church: apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers. Only the evangelist seems not necessarily to be a member of a ‘team’. The others are portrayed throughout the New Testament working in teams, for example Peter and John (Acts 8:14-25); and Paul, Barnabas and Titus (Gal 2:1). It reflects a sense of **collective responsibility**. **Prophets seem to check each other’s message and ministry** (Prince).

When an apostle becomes resident, he serves as a co-elder and is no longer identified by the designation of apostle: see 1 Pet. 5:1-2. The task of the prophet is to continually discharge fresh vision or revelation into the church, as people cannot live in spiritual victory without fresh vision. Apostles and prophets are responsible for order in the church. The evangelist introduces the sinner to the Saviour and as such has no ministry directly within the assembly of believers (Prince). Although their ministry is to the unchurched, evangelists should be grounded in, and accountable to the local church (India, 2000:2).

The local church falls under the collective leadership of a resident team of shepherds or elders (Acts 20:17, 28). They are **always mentioned in the plural form**: see for example, Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5 and James 5:14. Their task is to oversee or rule, and to teach (grass roots teaching). Their qualification is 'elder', and their ministry 'shepherd'. For the local church the significance of the shepherd's ministry is that sheep without a shepherd become scattered, a picture that is all too often true of the modern church (Prince).

### **The church in need**

The church of today is in dire need of the five-fold leadership. There is no accurate Biblical basis to suggest that any of them were temporary or only for the early church. Scripture, if it is not taken out of its context and fragmented, shows that they will remain until their purpose is accomplished (Eph 4:13; India, 2000:1).

Too many areas of Christendom have not matured beyond a limited stage of growth, because they recognise only two, and sometimes three, of the five main ministry gifts: evangelist and pastor (often a rather twisted view of the pastor's office), and sometimes teacher (Hagin, 1996:2). It has nothing to do with individual status, office or title. **All five ministries have to function together to equip and build up the body of Christ.** They embody God's program for the maturing of God's people. This does not seem to be a task that ever comes to an end as younger generations step into life in the place of the older ones.

**It is a sad commentary on the church, that the leadership model given out of the wisdom of God is brushed aside so easily.**

## **2 THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE**

The term 'apostle' is derived from the Greek word *apostolos*, that means '*one who is sent forth as a messenger and is fully authorised to represent the one whose name he bears.*'

### **Different kinds of apostles**

Three kinds of apostles are mentioned in the New Testament:

- Jesus Christ, the Chief Apostle, sent forth by his Father (Heb 3:1).
- The twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:14). These were the 12 disciples called by Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. They were first called apostles when Jesus sent them forth in Matthew 10:1-5. After Christ's ascension, Matthias was authenticated by the Holy Spirit to replace Judas (Acts 1:24, 25).
- The other New Testament apostles.

The Twelve were sent as **eye witnesses** of the ministry, works, life death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8, 22). They are unique. The Bible directly and explicitly confers on them a position no others would have again (Rev 21:14).

Paul, Barnabas, Silas, James (the brother of Jesus) Timothy and Apollos are the most notable among the other New Testament apostles. There is a **limited calling** to their ministry. Whereas the Twelve's commission did not seem to have specific limits laid down, Paul, for example, was called by The Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1 & 1 Tim. 1:1) as his apostle to the gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal 1:16; 2:7-9). In this capacity he became God's master builder (or architect) of the church among the gentiles (1 Co 3:10).

### **Two distinct situations**

There are two distinct situations in the Bible: **Before Pentecost** the twelve disciples became apostles when they were 'sent forth' by Christ. **After Pentecost** people became known as apostles when they were 'sent forth' from a local church (with the exception of Paul, who was also sent forth by Christ). They reported back to the churches that sent them forth. Compare 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25. There is no evidence of apostolic succession (Prince).

### **Apostles today**

The debate about the existence of the apostolic office in the modern day church reflects extreme opposites. There are those who argue that there is no place for apostles today. Some have it that the apostolic office ended in the first century with the death of John, while others argue that it came to a close by the time the canon of Scripture was completed (Buchan, 1999:1).

Within the so-called modern apostolic movement, on the other hand, one finds an unbiblical occupation with status and titles. It is not uncommon to read about Apostle Dr so-and-so, Prophet so-and-so, etc. Within their services they are addressed by those titles.

In between these two extremes are those who limit the current role of the apostolic ministry to missionary work in areas of the world where the gospel has never been preached (Buchan, 1999:1).

Both extremes are without biblical foundation. True, the proponents submit biblical evidence, adding selective perceptions trying to vindicate their arguments. Vlach (2000:1), for example

states that “The use of the term ‘apostle’ in the New Testament refers primarily to the Twelve. The gift of apostle, though, was apparently (sic) broadened to include Paul, Barnabas, James and perhaps (sic) Silvanus.

- There is no direct or implied evidence that the apostolic office or ministry gift ended.
- The post-ascension office of the apostle described in Ephesians 4:11 will continue “*to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*” (Eph 4:12,13; NIV). One cannot deny the office of the apostle (as well as the prophet and teacher), yet retain the evangelist and pastor on the basis of the very same Scripture. Those who deny the apostolic office to the modern church, tend to ignore Ephesians 4:11-13 in their arguments.

### **Functions of an apostle: A comparison**

Buchan (1999:1-3) divides the role of the first-century apostles into six main functions. These functions are compared in the following table with the need of the church in 2001:

<b>FIRST CENTURY</b>	<b>2001</b>
1. Taking the gospel to unreached areas (Rom 15:20). This function embodied the central apostolic passion.	1. Penetrating unreached areas is still an <b>uncompleted part</b> of Christ’s Great Commission to the church.
2. Planting churches upon the foundation of Christ (1 Co 3:10-11). In some cases the apostolic ministry had to intervene to help established churches return to their scriptural foundation (Gal 1:6-10; 3:1-3; Rev 2:1-5).	2. Church planting is <b>as critical a need today</b> . Not only are God-gifted church planters (in the true Acts 2 sense of the word) needed all over the world, but apostolic leadership is needed by many existing churches in trouble or spiritual hibernation.
3. Appointing and training the initial leaders of a church (Acts 14:21-23; Tit 1:5).	3. Although seminaries and Bible schools have largely taken over the training role, <b>leadership training can never cease</b> . All can benefit from having a mentor and continuous training as the circumstances in their communities, societies, etc., change. Whether they attend seminary or not, young leaders are not always assured of the type of personal training and character development that Timothy received from Paul.
4. Dealing with specific problems, false doctrines, or sins (see the Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians, for example).	4. Many churches encounter situations that are difficult to resolve without outside help. This underlines the <b>need for ministers with apostolic authority</b> who can provide help churches to boldly apply the Word of God to areas of sin, imbalance, false doctrine, and division.
5. Promoting unity in the church (see Eph 4:1-16).	5. Promoting unity is still <b>a critical function</b> . One need only look carefully around to realise just how strong the forces of division are still at work. It often takes apostolic insight and authority to bring unity.
6. Demonstrating and imparting the supernatural dimension of the kingdom of God. Although it is	6. People look and see the manifestations of power in the occult and they are drawn to it. <b>The church</b>

God's intention for all believers to heal the sick, expel demons, and perform miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:17-20), apostolic ministers in particular are to bear this credential (2 Co 12:12).

**needs to see God's power in the congregations.** She cannot afford to be robbed of the powerful apostolic ministry any longer.

### **Concluding remarks: the apostolic office**

Buchan (1999:4) summarises the call for the recognition of the apostolic ministry well:

*“Despite our reservations and questions, God is again raising up apostles to serve the church – and if we are wise, we will recognize our need for such input. Discernment will be needed, for these ministers are unlikely to come with halos or with the word ‘apostle’ engraved on their business cards.*

*“So where are the apostles today? Many with apostolic gifts have purposely steered away from describing themselves with such a lofty term. They may even be serving in more traditional roles, such as denominational bishops or district overseers. Others have adopted an uncontroversial designation such as ‘church planter’ or ‘church consultant.’ And some ministers known to us as pastors or missionaries may actually have apostolic callings.”*

To do away with any of Christ's five-fold gift to the church is tantamount to saying she needs only a limited measure of Christ's ministry today.

## **3 SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

When James and John asked Jesus to let them sit at his right and left in his glory He called the twelve disciples together and taught them the basic lesson of servant leadership (Mark 10:42-45):

*“<sup>42</sup>You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (NIV).*

Jesus never presented the Twelve, and later the church universal, with the hierarchical style of leadership the world adores. The church was not to be an organisation, but a living “organism” called the Body of Christ. Authority of the leaders would not come from recognition by an organisation, their personal position or anything within themselves. They would learn to lead by serving. The five-fold ministry was given by the ascended Christ as a gift of servant leadership to the church – a continuation of His own ministry. Leadership authority comes from the Word of God and from the members of the Body of Christ who respond to the leader's character and fruit of his or her leadership gifts.

## **Character**

None of the five-fold ministry gifts in their pure, unpolluted, Christ-given appearance focus on roles, power, authority, position or privilege. They emphasise character. Servant leadership in the church is a calling and not a profession. Such a calling clearly involves a price. Nouwen, (Plett, 1997:4), states that true servant leaders are not professional religious practitioners, but men and women of God **called to minister to God's people according to God's directions.**

Does this exclude a full-time ministry? No, it means that the focus is on service, not lordship; on gifts, not rights; on effective ministry, not position or career; on empowering the **whole church**, not only a select few (Plett, 1997:4,5). Servant leaders lead by example, not from their 'organisational' position. This was the challenge Paul extended to Titus (Tit 2:7).

## **Fruit**

Servant leaders in the church are **Spirit filled and called persons who influence God's people through character and example, to achieve God's purposes for all.** They are kingdom builders and not empire builders. They lead with the aim to achieve **God's purposes**, not for only a gifted or enthusiastic few, but for **all**. God's purposes are based on the equipping of the saints for their work of service, not on nice to haves. To neglect this, is to equip God's people with 'fire insurance' instead of the fullness of God's purposes for them (1 Co 3:13-15):

*"<sup>13</sup>...his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. <sup>15</sup>If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." (NIV).*

It is the Body of believers that recognises a person's gifts and the Lord who confirms it by the fruit of the person's leadership. The fruit is the measure of equipping of the saints, not the numbers of responses to altar calls or names on the membership list:

*"Too many new converts sit down with the fact that they are converted. Born into the kingdom, they are satisfied to remain babies or dwarfs. To make a profession seems to be about the beginning and the end of their religion. They have no spiritual ambition to get beyond their alphabet, and the Church of Christ gains very little more than their useless, uncreditable names on their muster-roles" (Dr. Cuyler, quoted by Hills, 1896:2).*

## **Principles of servant leadership**

The leadership examples and teachings of Jesus display seven important principles (Wilkes, 2000:4,5):

1. Humility: God will exalt them (Gal 1:10).	<i>‘For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’</i> (Luke 14:11, NIV)
2. Following Jesus rather than seeking a position.	Jesus illustrated this when he admonished James and John for seeking positions of honour at his right and left (Mark 10:35-40).
3. Servant leaders give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others.	Leaders will find their greatness in leading others to achieve God’s purpose in each one’s life. Mark 10:41-45 presents a teaching on leadership by Jesus that, sadly, not too many church leaders have seemed to adopt: <i>“<sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”</i> (NIV)
4. Servant leaders can risk service to others because he or she trusts God to be in control of their lives.	<i>“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.”</i> (John 13:3; NIV).
5. Servant leaders will take up Jesus’ towel of servanthood to meet the needs of others.	The foundational model of servant leadership is Jesus dressed like a servant, acting like a slave and still leading his disciples to the mission God had called them to do (John 13:4-11).
6. Sharing responsibility and authority with others to meet a greater need.	Matt. 28:1-20 and Acts 1:8 show how Jesus shared his responsibility of mission with his followers, commissioning and empowering them to continue his mission after his ascension.
7. Servant leaders multiply their leadership by empowering others to lead.	Jesus built a team of followers whose leadership is still giving direction to the church 2000 years later.

### **Implications for church leadership**

Wilkes (2000:6) shows that Jesus’ model and teachings of servant leadership have significant implications for today’s church leaders:

1. Servant leadership takes the focus off the individual leader and shifts it to the mission he or she is called to lead others to accomplish. The mission becomes the motivation for others to follow.	Servant leadership does not promote acclaim for superstars. Its fruit will manifest in people rejoicing over what happened at meetings, instead of remembering the individuals who ran it.
2. Jesus provided a universal leadership model for his followers. He demonstrated timeless principles, not formulas or gimmicks, in leading people to achieve God’s purposes in their lives.	This model rises above all other cultural and personality driven models of leadership. It can be applied in any situation of conflict and need among the people of God.
3. The importance to complete God’s mission becomes the priority above personal agendas of the leaders.	The very nature of servant leadership demands that the leader gives up personal rights and goals to be served to find greatness in service to those who have given him or her the privilege to serve. Humility and patience will

	be characteristic of the effective servant leader.
4. Success is defined by how effective <b>the group</b> has been in achieving the goal.	Success in the kingdom of God is achieving God's purposes, not satisfying a culture's expectations of achievement. It includes building a team that will ensure continuation of the mission in the leader's absence.

### Who is master?

A servant has meaning only in relation to a master. If the role of master is granted to any other individual, church, church board, etc., servant leadership becomes biblically distorted. Servant leadership does not deny accountability to the local church, but neither does it deny obedience to God. It will not sacrifice obedience to God in the face of manipulation by the board or members of the local church.

John G. Lake wrote to a church leader in South Africa in 1928, that his difficulty seemed to be that he could not make people appreciate God:

*“They had so much more appreciation for order and system in the work than they had of God and His presence and power. You could not make them understand that they were organizing God out of the work.”* (Lake, 1994:xxxii, xxxii).

### Concluding remarks: servant leadership

Only two of church leadership characteristics described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 have to do with academic skills. **All 24 of them, however, relate to character.**

Servant leaders are people who work as leaders of the church, servants of Christ, and are motivated by a sense of calling. This call to ministry has unfortunately all too frequently been replaced by hiring the most qualified ministerial practitioner. Dr. Smith Baker (quoted by Hills, 1896, chapter 3:4) stated that far too many preachers (church leaders) have had religious conviction without spiritual experience.

## **CONCLUSION**

Churches and Christian organisations are commonly run along secular corporate lines and management practices, including the hierarchical organisation. It should therefore be no surprise to realise that church leaders are often in bondage to ‘the organisation’.

Discussing a congregation's position with their (only) pastor, well knowing his heart was no longer with their denomination's spiritual state and approach, his answer was: “You must realise that I have a wife and two children to care for. I cannot put my pension and medical fund in jeopardy.”

Surely any reasonable person would appreciate his dilemma. But at the same time it is a vivid illustration of the state and tragedy of being a church leader within the dictates and confines of contemporary church systems and denominations.

All of this cries out for a return to the God inspired model and purposes of Ephesians 4. Restoration of the five-fold leadership ministry would above all doubt receive God's favour. To deny any one of the five is to deny the church part of the fullness of God in Jesus Christ. Organisational systems should be subject to the five-fold leadership model and not vice versa. There does not seem to be any other way to rise up to the challenge posed to the church in Hosea 4:6:

*"My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests."*

At the same time there is a need for true servant leaders who enter the full-time ministry in answer to God's call to do so, and not because of parent or peer pressure, or any other reason. Leaders who fill those positions without the firm conviction of the Holy Spirit, will lead half-heartedly and (in the words of Charles Spurgeon) be as a tree bearing no fruit, standing where another fruitful tree might grow (Hills, 1896:2).

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