

What is our Job?

A New Testament Understanding of Leadership in the Local Church

1. ORIENTATION

Our first step is to make sure that we are heading in the right direction, because of the ‘garbage in, garbage out’ rule. The reality is that *wrong methods are highly unlikely to lead to right conclusions*.

A. METHODOLOGICAL

In this field of study, the ‘right method’ must involve the following:

Asking the Right Questions

It is important that we understand why we can’t ask such questions as the following: According to the NT, what is the job of a Pastor in a local church? Or, according to the NT, what is the job of a Rector in a parish?—or the job of the Deacons’ Board?—or of the Parish Council?

Why not? Because we cannot treat our structures and systems as a given, to be supported by whatever NT data seems relevant. Questions such as these do just that, because they assume that the NT can provide a direct answer. It could only do so, however, if Rectors and Deacons’ Boards correspond exactly to positions and groups in the NT churches. They may or may not do so—but we have to *establish* that they do, and must not simply assume that they do.

So, instead of beginning with questions of this kind, we must (1) *examine* what the NT has to say about and to its own context, and (2) *discern* how to apply what we discover to our own situation. That is, we have to do with this issue *exactly* what we have to do when we are preparing sermons or Bible studies on Galatians.

Where does this leave us today, though? Our task is to examine what the NT says ... *about what?* If we can’t ask what it says about the job of a Pastor or Rector, what can we ask? An appropriate question—and the one that best suits our purposes today—is, ‘What can we learn from the NT about leadership of the local church (or its equivalent)?’ Although it may need to be defined more precisely at some point, ‘leadership’ is general enough to cover both what we need to find in the NT and what we are seeking to do in our own ministries.

... in the Right Way

It is just as important to follow the right procedures as to ask the right questions, because *how we look largely determines what we find*.

As most of the evidence relevant to our inquiry comes from Paul, directly or (in Acts) indirectly, we need to think about how to interpret the evidence he provides. For our purposes today, the most crucial issues are the following.

First, Paul's exhortations about "ministry" are usually addressed to real situations about which he is well-informed. He does not call for behaviour that is merely desirable in some abstract way or only in an ideal situation; he is speaking of conduct that is possible *in the actual situation he is addressing*.

So when he encourages the believers to engage in certain kinds of mutual ministry, he is speaking to a situation in which such interaction is easily possible. If the mutual activity is to occur in the church-meeting (and why wouldn't it?), this means that the meeting-place, and the group that meets in it, will not have been very large. (Even if we believe—on what grounds?—that the interaction he commends is to occur outside the church-meeting, the church must have been small enough for all the members to know each other and to meet often enough for real mutuality to occur in the way they related.)

In short: exhortations like Col 3:16 and 1 Th 5:14-15 presuppose a small church, probably one that meets in someone's house. Such exhortations also have direct implications for the kind of leadership that will be needed and offered in such a setting.

Secondly, much the same can be said about Paul's references to leaders and leadership-positions. Here too he is referring not to an abstract ideal, but to real situations. These real situations were groups of people ('churches') and the way they functioned. And unless we have evidence to the contrary, it is appropriate to assume that the basic features of all group-life will have been evident in Paul's churches.

Of most relevance to our subject today is the matter of group-structure. The most common pattern in group-life is that groups function in flexible and informal ways initially, and that they become steadily more structured as their size, age, and/or range of tasks increases. What is at first handled without much (if any) definition of roles and processes progressively requires clearer definition. Anyone who has gone through the experience of being part of a small church or ministry-team that keeps growing will know what this is all about. Without increasing attention to getting the structures and processes right, the whole thing threatens to run off the rails!

So we should expect to find that the degree of formalization reflected in the way Paul speaks about church leaders is directly related to such matters as the size of the church, its age, and the nature of the leadership task(s). The clearly defined leadership-structures that are evident at a certain stage in a church's life would have been more of a hindrance than a help at a much earlier stage; conversely, the relatively informal leadership processes that were perfectly adequate at an early stage would only frustrate rather than facilitate the church's mission and growth if they did not change. In other words, there are strong *prima facie* reasons for anticipating that the NT evidence will attest a process of development in the way leadership is exercised and defined.

The size of a group has an obvious bearing on the question of leadership. In a home-group of 8-10 people, the leadership tasks are clear and easily defined. The group may not have a leader in a formal sense, either because the person in whose home the group meets is automatically regarded as the leader, or because (by mutual consent)

the group members take it in turns to lead. However, in a church-meeting of 40-50 people, roles (preacher, service-leader, and so on) are usually defined and allocated explicitly—because tasks that are not allocated to anybody end up being done by nobody! When the church-meeting involves more than 100 people, these leadership tasks are often planned and performed by members of a leadership-group. Increasing size leads to increasing definition of structure, including increased formalization of leadership-roles.

The age of a group is also an important determinant of how leadership is understood and exercised within it. Activities that were initially very flexible and informal gradually become routine, in the sense that they come to be undertaken in a predictable manner by the people best suited to doing them. As the tasks involved gradually receive sharper definition by being performed consistently, it also becomes clearer to the group that not everyone is able to perform these tasks effectively. And as contributions that the group regards as central to its life and purpose are routinized in this way, those who make them come to be perceived and relied on as leaders. Thus, so far as the emergence of leadership-positions is concerned, the group's 'mission' leads to the corresponding function, and the function creates a corresponding position.

The nature of a group's task also has a significant bearing on how much definition is given to its structures and processes—and thus to its leadership. It would be a very strange Bible study group that decided it needed a Constitution! On the other hand, even though the number of people involved may be much the same, it would be a very unwise Deacons' Board/Parish Council that attempted to function without defined procedures for reaching and recording decisions. In addition, those who are not members expect much more of a church council than they do of a home group—and this accountability also increases the degree of formalization needed.

This brief foray into group-process tells us something important about our approach to the NT evidence. We would be justified in expecting that the various NT references to leaders and leadership-positions can be integrated into a standard template *only if* all of the churches concerned were of the same size and age.

It is important for us to recognize that the NT letters are like snapshots that freeze one moment in a process of development that unfolds over time. And the fact is that the snapshots that tell us something about leadership come from various stages in the growth of a church, as we will see below.

In short: what we see in 1 Th 5:12-13 is adequate for a house church less than a year old, while what we see in 1 Tim 3, though neither needed nor desired by such a young house-church, is both appropriate and necessary in a much larger, older church.

Thirdly, Paul (unlike some of his fans and successors?!) does not say what does not need to be said. So, unless something is going wrong, he will have no occasion to speak about leadership where it is obvious to everyone how and by whom it is to be exercised.

Think again about our home group. In some societies it will simply be taken for granted that the leader of the group is the man in whose house it meets; in others, that the leader is the group's oldest male member; in others, that it is the person with the greatest Bible knowledge, or whoever has had any formal theological education; and so on. The point is that the society (or the sub-society) to which we belong automatically answers some of our leadership questions, so that we do not even get to ask them. And it is normal to accept those answers unless and until we become aware that doing so compromises something that is integral to our sense of identity and purpose.

That was certainly the case for the churches of the NT period. Some questions about leadership did not need to be asked, let alone answered. Our task as interpreters is to try and identify which template(s) they (consciously or unconsciously) accepted in defining their corporate life and its leadership.

Early Christianity was an urban phenomenon, and the models of leadership and structures of organization which were most accessible to them were those of the Graeco-Roman cities, the Roman colonies, the ubiquitous smaller guilds and associations of which some Christians would have been members, the family and household networks within which both citizens and non-citizens lived, and the Jewish synagogues by then established throughout Palestine and the diaspora.¹

There were, in other words, a range of possible 'taken-for-granted' that could have shaped their expectations about, and exercise of, leadership in the local church. Again, we will return to this below.

All of this has one particularly important implication. Like our home group, the NT churches, and the particular forms that leadership took within them, were 'incarnated'. This means that they were embedded within certain social patterns and conventions. But it also means that, as is true of all human groups and activities, they embodied some elements of their social and cultural context. Consequently, our ability to replicate NT patterns of leadership is directly proportional to the degree of similarity between their society and ours. Our society is, of course, markedly different from theirs in some very fundamental ways—which means that there are some features of the leadership structures in the NT churches that we cannot reproduce, however hard we try. This should not be seen as a problem, though. After all, none of us believes that becoming like Jesus means learning to speak Aramaic or participating in synagogue meetings every Saturday! In the same way, being faithful to the NT in our exercise of leadership does not require us to return to first-century social patterns and cultural norms.

... from the Right Basis

Unfortunately, this is an area of NT study that is littered with false assumptions, inadequate methods and mistaken ideas. As a result, it will help to clear the decks a little before we have a look at the NT. Although often found in textbooks and other major works, the following views are simply mistaken and should be abandoned.

¹ Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World) (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 3 (footnote omitted).

- (a) The NT churches had a uniform organizational structure.²
- (b) The NT churches used a fixed terminology for their leadership positions.
- (c) The NT churches were modelled structurally on the synagogue.³
- (d) “Elder” designated an office, first in the synagogue, and then in the local church.⁴
- (e) Paul’s churches had a charismatic rather than institutional character, and thus functioned as organisms rather than organizations.⁵
- (f) The church-structures reflected in the Pastorals represent the emergence of a thoroughly un-Pauline “early Catholicism”.⁶
- (g) Paul’s descriptions and exhortations directly created specific social structures and leadership patterns. This is the “fallacy of idealism”, which has been described as follows:

Idealism in historical research [is] ... the view that the determining factors of the historical process are ideas and nothing else ... The methodologically fateful step comes ... where the historical phenomena are ... interpreted as being directly formed by underlying theological structures. These structures are found by a sophisticated analysis of the texts where the New Testament author (for instance Paul) comments theologically on the phenomena in question (e.g. 1 Cor 12 on pneumatic gifts). Thus what is in reality a secondary reaction (Paul’s theology of charisma) on [sic] primary, concrete phenomena in the social world (the pneumatic gifts in Corinth) is misinterpreted as being the structuring principle of that social world. This confusion between phenomena and descriptions of these phenomena is due to a fundamental deficiency in methodology. What is missing in this type of theologically determined historical reconstruction is an awareness of the continual dialectic between ideas and social structures. Social life is determined by social factors, including the opinions and consequently the theology of the actors. Paul’s theology of charisma probably did have an effect on the Corinthian church, but not ... in any simple, straightforward

² Note Clarke’s observation: ‘... the early Pauline communities were, to a large extent, organizationally independent of each other. They were able to adopt and adapt different dynamics of leadership ... This is not to suggest, however, that all the measures adopted were equally acceptable to Paul.’ (*op.cit.*, 169f.)

³ A view perpetuated most recently in Roger Beckwith, *Elders in Every City: The Origin and Role of the Ordained Ministry* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003).

⁴ The definitive refutation is R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). One of the many defects in Beckwith’s book is that although he is aware of Campbell’s work, he fails completely to engage with it.

⁵ So, for example, Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (London: A&C Black, 1969), chapters 3 and 4; James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), chapter IX.

⁶ In addition to the works in the previous footnote, the most vigorous presentation of this view is in Ernst Käsemann, “Ministry and Community in the New Testament” in his *Essays on New Testament Themes*, SBT 41 (London: SCM, 1964), 63-94.

fashion as if ideas could act directly on social structures... [This] is a fallacy because it analyses only part of the historical reality while considering this to be the entire or essential reality... The interdependence and dialectical development of theology and social structure is the central fact that must be taken as a starting point for historical research.⁷

This obviously relates to the matter raised in the third point made on page 3 above.

⁷ Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund: Gleerup, 1978), 205-207.

B. THEOLOGICAL

In addition to employing suitable methods of investigation, our study of the NT evidence also needs a theological framework by which to interpret and appropriate what we discover. What such a framework might involve is suggested in the following brief sketch.

Jesus is the foundation of all Christian ministry.

- (a) Jesus is the Servant-Lord.
Matt 12:17-21; 20:26-28/Mark 10:43-45; Luke 22:27; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30; Rom 15:8; Phil 2:5-11
- (b) Jesus is the PIONEER of ministry: first, we must be served *by* him.
Matt 20:25-28/Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-27; John 13:1-9
- (c) Jesus is the PATTERN of ministry: then, we must serve *like* him.
Matt 20:25-28/Mark 10:42-45; John 12: 24-26; 13:12-17; Phil 2:3-8

All Christian ministry is responsive.

- (a) It is *based* on his GIFTS.
 - 1. We receive *serving* grace, as well as *saving* grace.
Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 4:7; 1 Pet 4:10

Paul: Rom 1:5; 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor 3:10; 15:10; Gal 2:9; Eph 3:2, 7-8
 - 2. We receive the gift *of* ministry, as well as gifts *for* ministry.
Acts 20:24, 28; 2 Cor 4:1; 5:18; Eph 4:7, 11; Col 1:25; 1 Tim 1:12-13
- *No ministry is ever a matter of doing God a favour.*
 → *All ministry is always a privilege: we have it only because God has made room for us in his work.*

- (b) It is *shaped* by his SERVICE.

- 1. It means FOOTWASHING [*humble* service].
Matt 18:4; 23:5-12; 25:31-40; John 13:12-15; 1 Pet 5:1-5

Advancement in the kingdom is not by climbing but by kneeling.⁸

- 2. It means SUFFERING and DYING [*sacrificial* service].

⁸ Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1963), 43.

Matt 5:11-12; 10:24-39; Mark 10:28-30; 13:9-13; Acts 5:40-42; 9:16; 20:18-24; 2 Cor 4:8-12; 11:23-28; Phil 2:25-30; 1 Thess 2:1-2; 2 Tim 1:8; 2:3, 8-13; 3:10-11; 4:5, 14-18; Heb 10:32-36

No ministry is worth anything at all which is not first and last and all the time a ministry beneath the Cross.⁹

→ *'The servant is not greater than his master.'*

All Christian ministry is dependent.

(a) We are dependent on his calling and enabling—so it involves ALL BELIEVERS EQUALLY.

1. All believers are called to be *servants*.
Matt 20:26-27/Mark 10:43-44/Luke 22:24-26; Matt 23:11; Mark 9:33-35; Eph 4:12; 1 Pet 4:10
2. All believers are called to serve *the Lord*.
Matt 4:10/Luke 4:8; John 12:26; Rom 12:1, 11; 14:4, 18; 1 Cor 12:5; Col 3:24; 1 Thess 1:9; Heb 9:14
3. All believers are called to serve *other people*.
Rom 12:13; 13:7-10; 14:19; 15:2; Gal 5:13; 6:2, 10; 1 Thess 5:14-15; Heb 6:10; 13:1-3, 16; Jas 1:27; 2:14-17; 1 Pet 4:10; 1 John 3:11-18
4. All believers are to be servants in and with *everything*.
Luke 17:10; Rom 12:1; Col 3:23-24; 1 Tim 6:17-19; Tit 2:9-10; Heb 10:32-34

(b) We are dependent on his gifting—so it involves EVERY BELIEVER DIFFERENTLY.

1. There is a wide variety of diakoni/ai ('ministries'): that is, ways in which every believer can and should serve.
Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:4-6, 12-14; 1 Pet 4:10-11
2. Yet some are more central or foundational than others.
1 Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20; 4:11-13

⁹ James S. Stewart (I haven't been able to track down the reference).

2. INVESTIGATION

What do we learn from the NT about leadership in and of the local church? A great deal has been written on the subject, and there are significant differences of scholarly opinion on many of the issues. Without wanting to imply that none of this scholarly work is of any value by largely neglecting it here, all that I can do in this context is to summarize my understanding of how the NT evidence should be interpreted.

(a) *What kind of groups were the NT churches?*

So far as church-leadership goes, in the NT the church comes first and local leadership second. That is, leadership is not prefabricated, ready to be bolted onto a church as soon as it is founded; rather, it arises within the life of a church. As a result, before we look at their leadership, we need to look at the churches themselves. And as almost all of the available evidence concerns Paul's churches, we will largely confine our attention to them, and within that area, we will largely focus on those churches whose letter(s) gives us some information about how they were led.

For our purposes, the most important datum is the distinction Paul makes between the 'house church' (h9 kat) oi}kon e0kklhsi/a)¹⁰ and the 'whole church' (h9 e0kklhsi/a o3lh).¹¹

What did this mean in practice for the churches we are considering?¹² Without going into detail, I think the best reading of the evidence (listing the churches in an order that corresponds to the chronological order of the letter that is specified) can be summarized as follows:

1. The church in Thessalonica [*1 Th*] consisted of at least one house-church,¹³ and had been in existence for somewhat less than a year.
2. The believers in Corinth [*1 Cor*] met both in a number of house-churches¹⁴ and also in plenary assemblies (1 Cor 11:18, 20; 14:23; Rom 16:23). This church had been in existence for around 4 or 5 years.

¹⁰ See Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 2.

¹¹ See Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 14:23.

¹² The most recent, and by far the most comprehensive treatment of this subject is Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004).

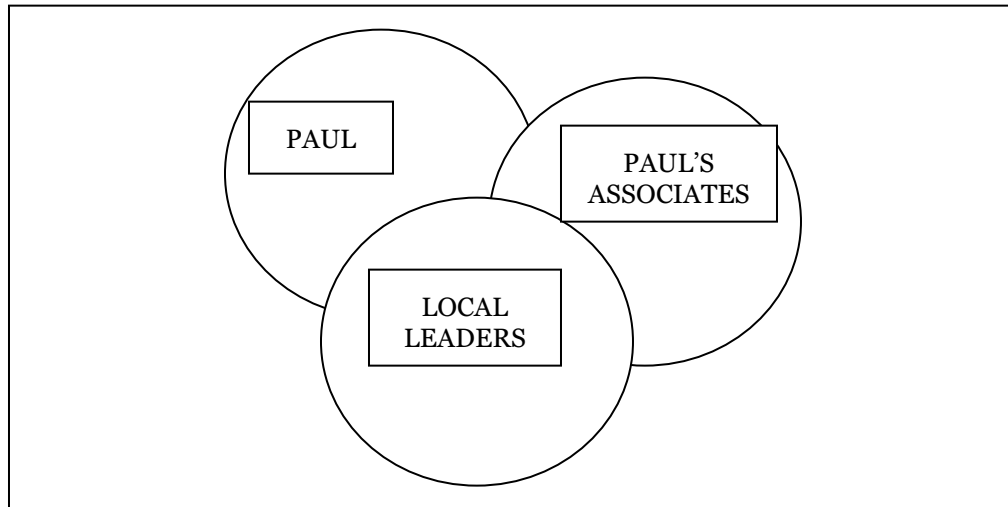
¹³ Acts 17 implies that Jason hosted the church in his house. The solemn exhortation (using the very strong e0nor ki/zw) to ensure that the letter is read to 'all the brothers' (1 Th 5:27) *may* imply that there are several house-churches (so Gehring, 133 n.83). If so, this necessitates the further implication that there were no 'whole-church' assemblies at which the letter could be read. However, since 5:27 can be explained in other ways (e.g., that some believers were prevented from attending every meeting of the church—or even that some were choosing to absent themselves [perhaps one or more of the groups mentioned in 5:14, who would be the very ones Paul most wanted to hear what he had to say to them]), there is no solid reason for assuming that there were several house-churches—especially at such an early stage of the church's life.

¹⁴ What evidence we have suggests that Stephanas (1 Cor 1:16; 16:15), Crispus (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14), Gaius (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14), and possibly also Chloe (1 Cor 1:11) and Erastus (Rom 16:23),

3. The church in Philippi [*Phil*], which had been in existence for approx. 10-12 years, consisted of a number of house-churches¹⁵ whose members did not meet in plenary assembly¹⁶ (presumably because they had no access to a venue of sufficient size).
4. The church in Ephesus had been in existence for approx. 7 or 8 years [*Eph*], or 10 or more years [*1 Tim*]. Like that in Philippi, this also consisted of a number of house-churches¹⁷ that did not gather in ‘whole-church’ assemblies.

(b) *What kinds of leadership were given to and in the churches?*

1. There were three overlapping or interconnected sources of leadership in Paul’s churches:



2. Some aspects of the leadership exercised by Paul—whether he was present or absent—were expressions of his apostleship, and were thus non-transferrable: for example, the right to give authoritative instructions about how believers ought to live (e.g., 1 Cor 14:37; 1 Th 4:1-3, 8). However, other aspects of his leadership also featured in that given by members of his mission-team (such as Epaphras [Col 1:6-7; 4:12-13], Timothy and Titus), as well as in that of

were house-church leaders (see Gehring, 137-42). The plurality of house-churches may also have been a factor in the factionalism Paul has to combat (1 Cor 1:10-13).

¹⁵ The narrative of Acts 16 may be intended to indicate that there were two house-churches from the beginning (Lydia’s and the jailer’s): see Gehring, 131f.

¹⁶ This is suggested by (1) the way Paul addresses them as ‘all the $\alpha\beta\gamma\iota\omicron\iota$ in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi’ rather than as ‘the church in Philippi’ (Phil 1:1), (2) the fact that he refers to them as a ‘church’ only when referring to ‘the beginning’ (4:15), and (3) the way he concludes the letter by urging them to greet ‘every $\alpha\beta\gamma\iota\omicron\jmath$ ’ (4:21)—an exhortation that would not be so necessary if the letter was read to a whole-church assembly.

¹⁷ This is the most likely meaning of the reference to men praying $\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\ \text{panti}\ \tau\omicron/\rho\omega\iota$ (‘in every place’) (1 Tim 2:8). The reference to believers who own slaves (6:2) and to believers who are wealthy (6:17) indicates that there were a number of people in the Ephesian church who were in a position to host a house-church.

local leaders. Our focus here will be on those leadership-tasks and –qualities that are common to all three of these sources of leadership.

(c) *What is significant about the terminology that was used for leaders?*

1. For the first readers of the NT, the most striking and significant feature of the terminology was what wasn't used! There were many leadership-words in common use in that society—but Paul and the churches chose not to use them.¹⁸
2. The most striking feature about the terminology that was employed is how ordinary it is. This is true at two levels. The first is the widespread use of words with very lowly connotations, most notably diakoni/a and its cognates.¹⁹ The second is that the NT's words mostly focus on the function performed, rather than on the status of the person who performs it.
3. Also significant is the fact that it is only in churches that are at least 10 years old that leadership-roles have specific designations attached to them. So both *Philippians* (1:1) and *1 Timothy* (3:1-13) refer to ἐπίσκοποι and διακονοί. This forms a distinct contrast with *1 Thessalonians* (5:12) and *1 Corinthians* (16:16) which employ participial constructions denoting the exercise of certain functions. This confirms the general observation made earlier (pages 2-3 above) that increasing size and age lead to increased formalization of structures and roles.
4. Another significant feature is the overlapping or interconnected manner in which the NT uses this terminology, as the following table (which is representative rather than comprehensive) shows:

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Th 5:12 | # | # | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 Cor 12:28 | | | # | # | | | | | | | |
| 1 Cor 16:16 | # | | | | # | | # | | | | |
| Phil 1:1 | | | | | | # | # | | | | |
| Phil 4:3 | | | | | # | | | | | | |
| Eph 4:11 | | | # | # | | | | | # | # | |
| 1 Tim 3:1-7 | | # | | # | | # | | | | | |
| 1 Tim 3:8-13 | | # | | | | | # | | | | |
| 1 Tim 5:17 | # | # | | # | | | | | | | # |
| Tit 1:5-9 | | | | # | | # | | # | | | # |
| 1 Pet 5:1-2 | | | | | | [#] | | | | # | # |
| Acts 13:1 | | | # | # | | | | | | | |
| Acts 20:28 | | | | | | # | | | | # | # |

¹⁸ See Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, SBT 32 (London: SCM, 1961), 171-76.

¹⁹ See Schweizer, 177-80.

The letters represent the following words or word-groups:

- A kopia/w (toil)
- B proi5sthmi (lead; act as patron)
- C profh/thj (prophet)
- D dida/skw (teach)
- E sunerge/w (collaborate)
- F e0pi/skopoj (supervisor)
- G diakone/w (serve)
- H oi0kono/moj (steward; manager)
- I eu0aggelith/j (evangelist)
- J poimai/nw (act as shepherd; care for)
- K presbu/teroj (older man; senior)

An obvious conclusion to draw from this survey of usage is that the words concerned are not used in an exclusive way: one and the same person may be characterized by several different words. Nor are the words used in a precise and delimited way: one word may encompass a range of distinguishable activities. What we must do is to allow the way a word is used in a given context to determine the meaning it carries in that instance, rather than assuming (and thus imposing) a uniformity of usage—and hence also a picture of fixed organizational structures.

(d) *What tasks were performed by the leaders?*

1. It is not accidental that most of the evidence available to answer this question comes not from letters written to churches, but from those written to people exercising leadership in churches (the ‘Pastorals’). In writing to churches, Paul usually has no need to go into detail about what their leaders do.
2. Again, it will be useful to deal with the evidence in the five letters already noted, and in their chronological order.
 - A. From Paul’s exhortations to the church in *Thessalonica* we learn the following:
 - He expected all of its members to be engaged in ‘pastoral care’ (1 Th 5:14).
 - He expected the believers to give proper recognition to those of their number who provided leadership (1 Th 5:12-13a). This recognition was to be in response to their work (dia\ to\ e1rgon au0tw~n), not their rank.
 - The structure of the reference in 5:12—one article governing three coordinated participles—shows that one group is in view, and that the contribution made by the people concerned has three dimensions that Paul regards as significant.

- The first is that they ‘toil’ (tou|j kopiw~ntaj e0n u9mi=n): the verb and its cognate noun form part of Paul’s mission-terminology.²⁰ Without losing its denotation (hard work), in Paul’s usage it has gained the connotation of effort invested in Christian service, especially church-planting and church-building.
- The second dimension of their activity is that they are tou|j ... proi+stame/nouj u9mw~n. Despite the tendency of English Bibles to translate this expression in ways that denote authority (‘are over you’ [KJV; RSV]; ‘have charge of you’ [NRSV]; and the like), its meaning is best seen through the connection with the cognate noun prosta/thj (‘patron’). These are people within it who function as ‘patrons’ for the church.²¹

This must be understood in an informal sense: these were not patrons in a technical, legal sense; rather, they were people like Phoebe (Rom 16:2). They functioned in a ‘patronal’ way, by putting their resources (whether economic or social, or whatever else) at the disposal of the church. One obvious way that this happened was the provision of their home as a meeting-place for the church, or to give accommodation to visiting Christian workers.²² Another was intervention in legal or civic affairs to protect fellow-believers.²³

- The third aspect of their contribution to the church’s life is their ‘ministry of the Word’. The term used (nouqetei=n) can have a narrow sense (‘admonish’, ‘warn’), but is more likely here to have the more general sense of ‘exhort’. They are people who urge the believers to stay faithful, to keep growing, and so on.
- This ministry of the Word is not exclusively the role of the group Paul is referring to, for the church as a whole bears the responsibility of ‘warning the disruptive’ (nouqetei~te tou|j a0ta/ktouj: v.14). So while all serve some by this means (v.14), some serve all by the same means (v.12).
- This leadership is given by some, not just by one. It is a collaborative contribution to the church’s life.
- The leadership given by this group results from the combination of ‘social’ (providing the resources the church needs) and ‘spiritual’ (giving the teaching the church needs) factors.

²⁰ See Rom 16:6, 12; 1 Cor 3:8; 15:10, 58; 16:16; 2 Cor 10:15; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Th 3:5; 1 Tim 4:10; 5:17.

²¹ See Gehring, 198-201.

²² Cp. Jason (Acts 17:5, 7); Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40).

²³ Cp. Jason (Acts 17:9).

B. From the evidence of *1 Corinthians* we learn the following:

- The kinds of people who provided leadership in Thessalonica were doing just the opposite in Corinth! It was those who had sufficient wealth and social status to engage in lawsuits (6:1-8), to buy meat (10:25-26), and to feast at the church meal (11:21-22), as well as at pagan temples (8:10), who were causing many of the problems Paul has to address in this letter.
- Nevertheless, there were some whose ministry Paul could commend—such as Stephanas and other members of his household (16:15-18). Paul’s twofold reference to Stephanas’ household (1:16; 16:15) most naturally implies that he is the leader of a house-church.
- The reason for Paul’s commendation—and the basis for the recognition the church should give them—is (as in 1 Th 5:12-13) what they do: they ‘set themselves to serve’ (ei0j diakoni/an toi~j a9gi/oij e1tacan e9autou/j). Again, Paul uses kopia=n of their service (... pantì tw~| ... kopiw~nti).
- Paul goes further in this commendation than in the corresponding one in 1 Thessalonians. He not only urges the church to ‘recognize’ them (e0piginw/skete ... touj toiu/touj: v.18); he also wants them to ‘submit’ to such people (u9pota/sshsqe toi~j toiu/toij: v.16): that is, to accept their leadership. This undoubtedly reflects the need to overcome the disorder in the church.
- There were prophets and teachers in the church (12:28). The prophets were caught up in the disorder plaguing the church-meetings (14:29-33), and thus did not offer leadership of a helpful kind. We are not given any indication of who the teachers were.
- In addition to those who were recognized as prophets and teachers, Paul also acknowledges that individual believers can contribute a prophetic word (11:4-5; 14:1-5, 26) or a piece of teaching (14:26) in church meetings. Again, as in Thessalonica, what all may do from time to time, some do regularly.
- The difference between the prophets and teachers and the other members of the church is thus one of degree and not of kind. In contrast to those who make occasional contributions in the church-meetings of a prophetic or teaching kind, the prophets and teachers are those who have been doing so regularly—and in a way that the church welcomes. The use of role-designations (profh/thj; dida/skaloj) indicates that their contribution is given regularly and is also both encouraged and expected.
- The leadership Paul wants the church to accept is not that of one individual, but one that is provided by a number of people. It is

something in which they work together: u9pota/sshsqe ... panti\ tw~| sunergou~nti (v.16).

- It is unlikely to be coincidental that the Stephanas whose leadership Paul is commending to the church was associated with Paul at the foundational stage of the church's life (1:16; 16:15). Given this, the conjunction of kopia/w and sunerge/w here, especially in light of the way these words or their cognates feature in Paul's 'mission-terminology', may well be intended to indicate that Stephanas' previous association with Paul is an important reason why his ministry is worthy of recognition. (This assumes that when he planted a church, Paul acted in accordance with his advice to Timothy [2 Tim 2:2]: that is, that he gave some training to those who could provide leadership for the church after he had moved on.)
- The leadership in 1 Th 5:12 stemmed from a combination of social and spiritual factors—and the same appears to be true of Stephanas' leadership (and that of others like him).

C. From the way Paul addresses the *Philippians* (1:1) we learn that:

- The church had e0pi/skopoi and dia/konoi.²⁴ Again, we note that leadership is shared.
- The e0pi/skopoi are (literally) those who 'oversee', and thus (to use the Latin-based equivalent) 'supervisors'. The dia/konoi are the 'servants' or 'helpers'—whether of the 'supervisors' or of the church.
- It is important to note the significance of the fact that Paul does not address the letter to 'the church leaders and members', but 'to all the saints ... along with the supervisors and helpers' (pa~sin toi~j a9gi/oij ... su\n e0pisko/poij kai\ diako/noij):

... the leaders are not "over" the church, but are addressed "alongside of" the church, as a *distinguishable* part of the whole, but as *part of the whole*, not above or outside it.²⁵

- If there were no regular meetings of the 'whole-church' in Philippi, the e0pi/skopoi (and perhaps the dia/konoi as well) were most likely a 'coordinating committee' of house-church leaders.²⁶ The existence of such a group enabled the whole community to maintain solidarity (note 1:27-30) and to take joint action, such as collecting funds to send to Paul (4:10-18). The e0pi/skopoi were thus 'supervisors' in a twofold

²⁴ Although it is possible that the two nouns form a hendiadys ('those who serve by supervising'), it is more likely that two groups are in view.

²⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 67 (his italics; footnote omitted).

²⁶ See Campbell, *Elders*, 123-25.

sense: each as leader of a house-church, and all collectively as overseeing the affairs of the whole Christian community.

- In 4:3, Paul refers to Clement and the rest of his *sunergoi/* ('co-workers'), men and women who worked with him 'in the gospel'. The most obvious way of interpreting this is that it refers to some of the first converts in Philippi, who joined in Paul's church-planting labours (what in 4:15 he terms 'the beginning of the gospel' [εὐαγγελίου]). It is probable that this group of *sunergoi/* overlaps with, or may perhaps be equated with, the *e0pi/skopoi* and *dia/konoi* of 1:1.
- As we have seen in previous passages, the ministry of these *sunergoi/* and that of all believers is different in degree rather than in kind. What his co-workers have done (εὐαγγελιστήσιν) 4:3 Paul urges the whole church to do: *sunaqlou~ntej th~| pi/stei tou~ eu0aggeli/ou* (1:27).

D. The only reference to leaders in *Ephesians* comes in 4:11, which indicates the following:

- In addition to those whose ministry involves many churches (the *a0po/stoloi*), the exalted Christ has gifted his body the church with prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers.²⁷
- The 'some for all' principle we have met in the previous passages is spelled out explicitly here. The gift of such people is for the purpose of bringing the whole church to completion or maturity in Christ (vv.12-13).
- Equally explicit is the 'ministry for all' principle that we have also encountered in the previous passages. The service of some enables the service of all: *pro|j to\n katartismo\n tw~n a9gi/wn ei0j e1rgon diakoni/aj* (4:12).²⁸
- It is worth noting that the ministry of the evangelist has some contribution to make to the church's *oi0kodomh/* ('building-up').
- The fourth of Christ's gifts are those who are, as the wording shows, both 'shepherds' and 'teachers'.²⁹ It is important to note that this

²⁷ It is likely that *Ephesians* was intended for the region that centred on Ephesus, rather than for Ephesus alone (Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Pillar Commentary) (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans/ Leicester: Apollos, 1999), 86f.). This gives 4:11 a greater degree of generality than would be the case in a letter addressed to one church.

²⁸ For a defence of this as the correct way of punctuating and interpreting v.12, see O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 301-303.

²⁹ One article governs the two nouns joined by the copula *kai/*. In his discussion of the underlying grammatical issue (the 'Granville Sharp rule': pp.270-90), Wallace argues that the first category is a subset of the second: 'all pastors were to be teachers, though not all teachers were to be pastors.' (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the*

combination of ministries is seen in the ministry of the Lord Jesus (Mk 6:34). It also indicates that shepherding God's people is done primarily by teaching, and that Christian teaching is intended to be pastoral in its character and effects.

E. Paul's instructions to Timothy about ordering the life of the church in *Ephesus* [**1 Tim**] tell us a great deal about local leadership—as does what he tells Titus about his role in the churches of Crete [**Tit**]. We can summarize what he says by asking the following three questions:

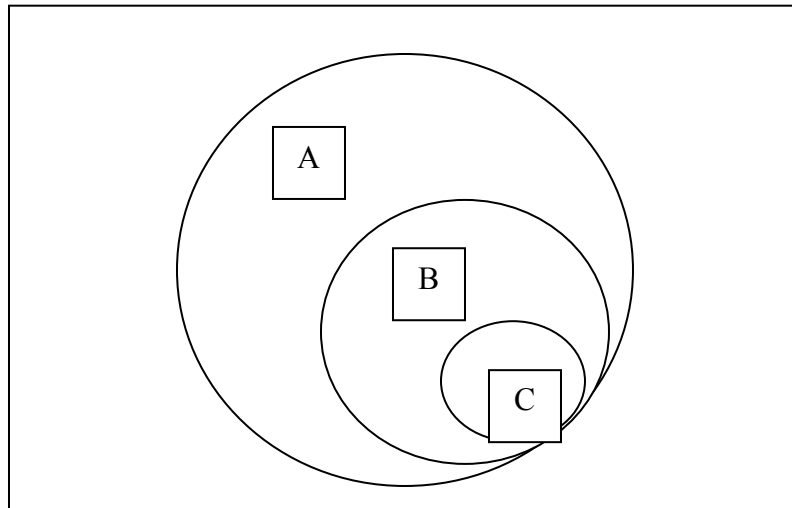
- Leadership *as what?* Local leaders are:
 - (1) the church's epi&skopoi (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7) or dia&konoi (1 Tim 3:8, 12).
 - (2) God's 'stewards' or 'managers' (oi0kono/moi: Tit 1:7), for the church is God's 'household' (oi]koj:1 Tim 3:15).
 - (3) 'elders' (1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:5).

Despite influential discussions that present a very different view, the NT use of presbu/teroj (elder) is best understood as follows:

1. The word means 'an older man', just as its antonym new/teroj means 'a younger man' (1 Tim 5:1; Tit 2:6; 1 Pet 5:1, 5).
2. Like our word 'senior', presbu/teroj was used both literally and in an extended sense. As we speak of 'senior positions' in an organization, so 'elder' could denote people of rank—and for the same reason: namely, that 'senior positions' were those that were normally occupied by older people. In a society whose cultural values included the duty of respect towards the senior citizens, 'elder' could easily acquire this added nuance.

New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 284.) There are two main problems with this view. The first is that Wallace's argument depends more upon his understanding of what 'pastors' and 'teachers' were in the NT period than upon grammatical and syntactical evidence. Secondly, he admits that the 'uniting of these two groups by one article sets them apart from the other gifted leaders.' He then concludes that an absolute distinction between the two groups 'is probably not in view.' (*ibid.*) Were it not for his views about pastors and teachers in the NT churches, Wallace the grammarian would surely have dismissed this conclusion as quite unsatisfactory. Not only is no absolute distinction in view, but there is no good reason to think that *any* distinction is in view! It must be remembered that we are dealing with a list of articular nouns. In this context the most natural way of understanding this fourth item is that it refers to one group of people: namely, 'pastors' who are also 'teachers'. Neither the construction nor the passage in which it occurs tells us anything about whether Paul thought it was possible or legitimate for some pastors not to be teachers or some teachers not to be pastors. What he is affirming is that the exalted Christ has given 'teaching shepherds' as his gift to his body the church.

3. One result of this cultural value was that older people were automatically given leadership roles in a range of social and political settings. So while leadership was exercised by ‘elders’, ‘elder’ is not a title for a leadership position.
4. The clearest evidence for this is 1 Tim 5:17, which enables us to see leadership in the church as follows:



The largest group consists of the ‘elders’: that is, the senior men (A). Within that group are those who are kalw~j proestw~tej (‘leading well’ or ‘functioning well as “patrons”’) (B). And within the latter group (most likely, house-church leaders) are oi9 kopiw~ntej e0n lo/gw| kai\ didaskali/a| (‘those who toil in the Word and teaching’) (C). The similarity with the reference to leaders in 1 Th 5:12 should not be overlooked.

5. So the leaders were elders, although not all elders were leaders. ‘Elder’ indicates their social position, which gave them a platform for the exercise of leadership, while other terms designate the content of their leadership (note how presbu/teroj in Tit 1:5 gives way to e0pi/skopoj in Tit 1:7).³⁰
- Leadership *in what?* In the ‘ministry of the Word’ (note especially 1 Tim 4:13; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:15, 24; 4:1-5; Tit 1:9).

Again, because they give so much information about this, we can summarize what we learn from these letters by asking the following three questions about the ‘ministry of the Word’:

³⁰ Although there are problems with his handling of some of the NT evidence, Campbell’s interpretation of what presbu/teroi means is largely right (*Elders*, especially chs.1-4).

(1) It is done with what *focus*?

- A focus on the *church*: a multi-faceted ministry, because of its ‘shepherding’ aims
 - ❖ teaching: *didasko*, *didaskalia*, *didaktiko* and *didaxh*
1 Tim 2:12; 3:2; 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:2b;
2 Tim 2:2, 24; 4:2; Tit 1:9; 2:1, 7
 - ❖ encouraging/exhorting: *parakaleo* and *parakalhsij*
1 Tim 4:13; 5:1; 6:2; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9; 2:6, 15
 - ❖ reminding: *u(pomimnh)skw* (2 Tim 2:11-14; Tit 3:1)
 - ❖ warning/rebuking: *e)le(gxw)* and *e)pitima(w)* 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9, 13; 2:15
 - ❖ training/correction: *paideu(w)* (2 Tim 2:25)
 - ❖ instructing: *paragge(lw)* and *paraggeli(a)*
1 Tim 1:3, 5, 18; 4:11; 5:7; 6:17
- A focus on the *world*: evangelism (2 Tim 4:2, 5)

(2) It is done for what *reasons*?

- because the truth *transforms* (1 Tim 4:6; 6:3; Tit 1:1): it is healthy (*u9gih/j*) and health-giving (*u9giai/nw*).
1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9, 13; 2:1, 8
- because error *destroys*.
1 Tim 4:1-3; 6:3-5, 20-21; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 3:6-8; Tit 1:10-16

(3) It is done with what *intentions*?

- leaders must **guard** the truth [1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13-14]
 - ❖ this means confronting sin and false teaching
1 Tim 1:3-4; 5:20; Tit 1:9, 13; 3:10-11
 - ❖ it also means avoiding *unnecessary* controversy, fighting only the battles that need to be fought (2 Tim 2:14, 16, 23; Tit 3:9)

- leaders must **ground** the truth: that is, teach pastorally, with a clear application to living as a believer. 1 Tim 1:5; 6:17-19; Tit 2:1-10; 3:8
 - leaders must **grow** in *eu0se/beia* ('devotion') 1 Tim 4:7-8, 12; 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; 3:14-17
- Leadership *with whom?*
 - (1) with *everyone*, in an appropriate way (1 Tim 5:1-2; Tit 2:1-10).
 - (2) with *other leaders*
 - because leadership is shared: it involves working with partners.
 - because leadership is purposeful: it involves training others (2 Tim 2:2).

(e) *What traits were required in the leaders?*

1. The most notable feature of the passages describing what is required in leaders is that they focus on *character* rather than *ability* (1 Tim 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-3).
2. The primary requirement is *integrity* in character and conduct. It is worth noting that many of the qualities specified are expressions of *self-control* or personal discipline.

It is also significant that the individual items listed are *not unique* to those in leadership, but characteristics that should be found in every believer.³¹
3. In addition to their integrity and self-control, particular emphasis is given to the leaders' *conduct of their households*: their marriage (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Tit 1:6), their relationship with their children (1 Tim 3:4, 12; Tit 1:6), and their hospitality (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8).
4. Leaders must evidence a *sound grasp of the Christian message*, to which they remain *loyal* in all circumstances (1 Tim 3:9; 4:6; 6:20-21; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 3:14—4:5; Tit 1:9). They must also be *able to teach* this message to others (1 Tim 3:2 [didaktiko/j]; 2 Tim 2:2; Tit 1:9).
5. Another prominent characteristic is *perseverance* (1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 3:14; 4:2, 7), especially in the face of *suffering* (2 Tim 1:8; 2:3, 8-13; 3:12; 4:5).

³¹ Note, for example, how the following adjectives are applied to both *e0pi/skopoi* (1 Tim 3:3) and other believers: *almaxoj* (1 Tim 3:3; Tit 3:2); *e0pieikh/j* (1 Tim 3:3; Phil 4:5 and Tit 3:2); *nhfa/lioj* (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 2:2); *sw/frwn* (1 Tim 3:2 and Tit 1:8; Tit 2:2, 5).

6. It is also made clear that leadership means providing an *example to other believers* (1 Tim 4:12; 2 Tim 3:10-11; Tit 2:7-8; 1 Pet 5:4). What the leader is to model is *integrity*, the harmony of head and heart, lip and life (1 Tim 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22-25; 3:10; Tit 2:7-8). But the integrity to be modelled is one that is being pursued, not one that has been achieved. What believers are to see in their leaders is *progress*, not perfection (Phil 3:12-17; 1 Tim 4:15-16).

(f) *Some CONCLUSIONS*

1. The predominant pattern in the apostolic period was that churches emerged in households, and existed originally as extended households. This had immediate implications for the character and shape of leadership in those churches:

Of all the patterns of community organization which were available to the early church (the civic contexts, the voluntary associations, the family and the Jewish synagogues), the one which could be most easily modified so as to be appropriate to the context of the Christian community was that of the family.³²

2. This observation leads to another that has particular relevance to our investigation:

... the household was more than a model; it was the matrix of the new congregation.³³

As a result, the head of a Christian household was the natural leader of the church whose nucleus it formed. While such people would not necessarily perform all the leadership roles that the church needed and valued, they would automatically be recognized and accepted as leaders. In an informal sense, they were the churches' 'patrons'.

3. In addition to its social and economic basis, local leadership also involved some form of the 'ministry of the Word'.
4. This specifically Christian contribution made by the leaders—as opposed to their 'patronage': the use of their social influence and economic means in the service of the church—was not different in kind from that which every believer could or should make.

So, to take just one example, while diakoni/a ('service') is the calling of all believers (Eph 4:12; etc), some activities in particular are designated as diakoni/ai (Acts 6:2, 4; Rom 12:7; 15:25-32; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 11-14; 1 Pet 4:11).

³² Clarke, *Serve the Community*, 251.

³³ Campbell, *Elders*, 118.

Likewise, although all believers are servants, some people in particular are designated as *dia/konoi* ('servants'): *Paul* (Acts 20:19, 24; 26:12-18; Rom 1:9; 11:13; 1 Cor 3:5; 4:1; 2 Cor 3:4-9; 4:1; 5:18—6:4; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23-25; 1 Tim 1:12); *his co-workers* (Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7, 17; 1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 1:16-18; 4:5, 11; Phm 13); and *local church-leaders* (Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 16:15; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13).

5. The house-church context in which leadership emerged involved the mutual ministry of believers to each other.³⁴

A type of dialectic is thus established between the responsibility of all and the function of some... In short, one could say that [leaders] and the community were in mutual (but not symmetrical) dependence ...³⁵

So the leader's role differed in degree rather than in kind from the contribution made by the church's members. What all did for some, some did for all (e.g., 1 Th 5:12, 14). And what some did for all, they did in order to ensure and enable the ministry of all (Eph 4:11-12).

6. Designated roles (such as 'teacher', 'shepherd', 'supervisor') emerged when a recognizable contribution was regularly made by the same person(s), when that contribution was valued by the church, and when it was recognized in some way by the church. This recognition probably involved one or more of the following: giving a name to the role; publicly acknowledging those who were already exercising it (by praying for them when the church gathered, etc); appointing someone(s) to perform the role.³⁶

³⁴ It is worth noting how wide-ranging are the ministries Paul expects believers to exercise in a mutual way or the relationships he expects believers to have with each other. The following examples give some idea of the extent of his expectations in this area:

a0gapa~n (*love*: Rom 13:8; 1 Th 3:12; 4:9; 2 Th 1:3)

a0ne/xein (*bear with*: Eph 4:2; Col 3:13)

basta/zein ta\ ba/rh (*bear the burdens*: Gal 6:2)

dida/skein (*teach*: Col 3:16)

diw/kein to\ a0gaqo/j (*pursue what is good*: 1 Th 5:15)

diw/kein ta\ th~j oi0kodomh~j (*pursue what builds up*: Rom 14:19)

douleu/ein (*serve*: Gal 5:13)

merimna~n (*care for*: 1 Cor 12:25)

nouqetei=n (*instruct, admonish*: Rom 15:14; Col 3:16)

parakalei=n (*encourage, exhort*: 1 Th 4:18; 5:11)

proslamba/nein (*accept, welcome*: Rom 15:7)

u9pota/ssein (*submit, yield*: Eph 5:21)

fronei=n to\ au0to/ (*have a common mind*: Rom 12:16; Phil 2:2, 5)

xari/zesai (*forgive*: Eph 4:32; Col 3:13).

³⁵ Annie Jaubert, "Les Épîtres de Paul: Le Fait Communautaire" in *Le Ministère et les Ministères selon le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: du Seuil, 1974), 25, 26 (my translation).

³⁶ This is the process by which function develops into 'office', a concept helpfully defined as follows: 'Constitutive of office are especially (1) the element of continuity, (2) the element of recognition by the church (an indication of continuity and recognition is a fixed designation of office), (3) the special position of an individual in relation to the church (authority; rank), (4) an ordered appointment (laying on of hands), the element of legitimacy, the legal securing of the function.' Ulrich Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt: Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf dem*

7. The same role could be exercised by various people, and the same person could exercise various roles. At least in the NT, there were no hard-and-fast distinctions between the various leadership roles.
8. The terminology used to designate these roles mostly focused on the function involved. Status- and rank-language was largely avoided. The underlying reason for this is made clear in Mk 10:42-45, for example.
9. The qualities expected in a leader are also to be evidenced in the life of every believer. What is distinctive about leaders, therefore, is not that they live differently from other believers but that they serve as examples to other believers. Leaders are to exemplify growth in all areas of the Christian life.
10. The most important service leaders can offer is to be *oi9 kopiw~ntej e0n lo/gw| kai\ didaskali/a|* (1 Tim 5:17; cp. 1 Tim 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 6:1-2; 2 Tim 2:15; 4:2; Tit 2:1, 15).

It is important to note two features of this ‘ministry of the Word’. The *first* is that it is to be pastoral in its character and aims. Leaders teach as shepherds of God’s flock. So their teaching is meant to enable believers to live with and for the Lord in every part of their lives and at every stage of their lives. Accordingly, this is a ministry with many dimensions—it consists not only of teaching but also of exhorting, warning, encouraging, and so on (see p.17 above).

The *second* crucial feature of the leaders’ ministry of the Word is that it is not a prerogative they keep for themselves. Rather, it is a role for which they are to equip others (Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 1:18; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:2; 3:10, 14). It is also a ministry which they are to encourage as widely as possible, so that it is exercised by as many believers as possible and in as many areas and levels of Christian life as possible (Rom 15:14-15; 1 Cor 14:1-5; Eph 4:11-15; Phil 1:14-18; Col 3:16; 1 Th 4:18; 5:11; Tit 2:3-5). Indeed, surely one of the most important signs of the effectiveness of a leader’s ministry of the Word is that it multiplies.³⁷

11. The process of development we see within the NT undoubtedly continued beyond the NT. Of particular importance is the question of what impact there was on local leadership when that of Paul or his co-workers was no longer available—that is, when the diagram on p.9 above had only one circle left.

The question is not, should the process of development already under way in the NT have continued? Rather, since this process would and did continue, what developments were legitimate—and what would or did constitute an improper development of the NT patterns?

Hintergrund der frühchristlichen Gemeindefunktionen, 2nd ed. (Wuppertal: Rolf Brockhaus, 1075), 24 n.106 (my translation).

³⁷ See the important discussion of this issue in Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Leicester: IVP, 1996), ch.4.

3. APPLICATION

A. Culture-specific or Transcultural?

How much of the NT information about church leaders is specific to that culture and neither able nor necessary to be transposed into our context? How much is valid across all cultures, and binding on us?

How much involves principles that we can and should embody in a way appropriate to our quite different setting?

B. Status or Role?

Do those who appointed me define my ministry primarily by my position in the organizational structure or by my function?

If the former, to what extent is this a problem?

If it is a problem, what changes are possible—and how can they be made?

C. Static or Dynamic?

Is the practice of my ministry primarily about a process in which I/we are involved or a set of duties to be repeated?

If the latter, to what extent is that a problem?

If it is a problem, what changes are possible—and how can they be made?

D. Maintenance or Mission?

Are the structures in which I exercise my ministry flexible enough to meet the challenges of the mission-field that is Australia today?

Or are they over-defined and over-regulated? If so, how can changes be made?

Are they backward-looking, maintaining a heritage or tradition? Or are they forward-looking and missional?

E. Junior or Senior?

Is 'seniority' (relative age) a significant factor in ministry in our society? If not, should it be?

Is it a mistake to appoint people to a whole-church leadership-position ('pastor') before they have reached a certain age or stage in life?

Are people fresh out of theological college likely to be focused on ideas and learning rather than issues and living—and thus unlikely to preach and teach in a suitably 'shepherding' way?

Is apprenticeship in ministry possible and desirable?

F. Church or World?

Do our ministry-structures mean that pastors live an essentially ecclesiastical life—as opposed to a normal life 'in the world'?

Does this mean that pastors tend (unconsciously?) to preach in a way that answers ‘church-questions’ (i.e., theirs) rather than ‘world-questions’ (i.e., those of the congregation)?

G. A case-study: Acts 20:17-38

1. A good place to begin is to identify the ministry-**verbs**, whether applied to the ministry Paul exercised in Ephesus or the ministry he expects these leaders to exercise. The verbs will tell us about the ACTIVITIES of ministry.

| | |
|-------|---|
| v.20: | a0nagge/llw (declare; announce); dida/skw (teach) [C] |
| v.21: | diamartu/romai (testify) [C] |
| v.24: | teleio/w (complete; fulfill) [A] |
| v.25: | khru/ssw (herald; proclaim; announce) [C] |
| v.28: | prose/xw (pay close attention); poimai/nw (shepherd; tend) [B] |
| v.31: | grhgore/w (be vigilant, alert) [B]; nouqete/w (instruct; warn) [C] |
| v.32: | parati/qhmi (entrust, commend) [B] |
| v.34: | u9phrete/w (serve, help, assist) [A] |
| v.35: | u9podei/knumi (show, make known) [D]; kopia/w (toil) [A] a0ntilamba/nomai (help, assist) [A] |

These can be classified as follows:

- A: serving activities
- B: overseeing or shepherding activities
- C: dimensions of the ‘ministry of the Word’
- D: providing an example

2. Now we need to notice the **nouns** that go with those verbs. These will tell us about the CONTENT and AIMS of leadership.

| | |
|-------|--|
| v.21: | meta/noia (repentance); pi/stij (faith) [B] |
| v.24: | dro/moj (race); diakoni/a (service); [A] |
| | eu0agge/ion th~j xa/ritoj tou~ qeou~ (gospel of God’s grace) [B] |
| v.25: | basilei/a (kingdom) [B] |
| v.27: | pa~sa h9 boulh\ tou~ qeou~ (God’s whole purpose/plan/will) [B] |
| v.28: | poi/mnion (flock); e0pi/skopoi (supervisors); [C] e0kklhsi/a (assembly, church) [C] |
| v.32 | qeo/j (God) [A]; o9 lo/goj th~j xa/ritoj au0tou~ [B] (the message about his grace) |

This tells us that ministry concerns:

- A: serving and trusting God;
- B: by communicating God’s Word (the message which reveals his kingdom-plan and his grace) and seeking right response to it;
- C: and watching over God’s people.

3. Now we need to notice the *pronouns*. This will make clear the FOCUS of this leadership.

The key is the constant use of u9mei=j (you)³⁸, which has both an individual (v.31: e3na e3kaston) and a collective sense: Paul served each of them and all of them—and so must the leaders he is addressing.

To apply this to our own setting: shouldn't we declare a moratorium (at least for a while) on the expression 'teaching the Bible'? Shouldn't we speak at least as often of 'teaching people'? If we only ever use the former expression, the focus of our 'ministries of the Word' will be good preparation (getting from the Bible to my talk) rather than good communication (getting the Bible to the hearers).

4. We need to notice the "accompaniment-*nouns*". These tell us about the CHARACTER of ministry.

v.19: tapeinofrosu/nh (humility); da/krua (tears)
 v.23: qli/yeij (troubles; afflictions)
 v.31: nu\c kai\ h9me/ra (night and day)

This tells us that there is a price to pay in ministry! (Note also vv.33-34.)

This raises the obvious question, 'Is it worth it?' Absolutely!!—

- (a) because it means forging bonds of love in God's family (vv.36-38).
 (b) because it is based on, dependent on, and focused on God's grace (vv.24, 32):

... grace is love which passes beyond all claims to love... Grace floods with affection the sinner who has deserved anger and resentment, trusts penitent treachery with a confidence which could not have been merited by ages of incorruptible fidelity, confers on a race which has been in revolt honours which no loyalty could have purchased ...³⁹

- (c) because it means serving those whom God purchased with the blood of his Own one—and serving One who was prepared to hold nothing back in order to make us his own (v.28).

³⁸ See vv.20, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32, 35.

³⁹ R. W. Dale, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (1883), 178.