

Grace Q&A 12

with

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1) What is plurality of leadership within the local church context

(This subject is covered more fully in Phase 6 of the Bible School in the subject 'My Church, My family')

In the NT, church leadership is always plural E.g.

'So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed' (Acts 14:23)

'From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church' (Acts 20:17)

'And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves' (1 Thes.5:12-13)

'Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct... Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you' (Heb.13:7&17)

'For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you' (Tit.1:5)

'Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine'

(1 Tim.5:17)

'Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord' (James 5:14)

'The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock' (1 Pet.5:1-3)

- ✓ **God does not want us to be alone in leadership**
- ✓ **His way seems to be to call a person, then raise a team around him. E.g. Nehemiah, Gideon**
- ✓ **NT leadership is characterized by interdependence. The focus is not on one person to make it all happen, but on Jesus our Chief Shepherd. We don't need another hero**
- ✓ **Plurality does not necessarily mean equality in gifting, e.g. 1 Tim.5:17. But equality in governance**
- ✓ **God's model is for elders to function as a team of shepherds who relate to each other in long-term ministry**

Some of the benefits of plurality:

- **Protection.** A person alone in leadership may break spiritually, physically and emotionally if other strong leaders are not around him. Team leadership preserves ministries
- **Provision for shepherding the whole flock**
- **Multiplied effectiveness (Deut.32:30)**
- **Less likelihood of spiritual abuse and control, 'I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church' (3 Jn.9)**

- **Encouragement and strength, 'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him' (Ecc.4:9-11)**
- **Reiteration of truth, Deut.19:15; Matt.18:16**
- **Provision for checks and balances, 'As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend' (Prov.27:17)**
- **Provision for training younger ministries**

2) Could you highlight more on the grace-based model of leadership at the local church level?

(This subject was addressed as Q.1 in the Q&A 11 session)

3) Does the NT recognize women leaders, i.e. as heads of local assemblies or denominations or ministries?

(This subject was addressed as Q.8 in the Q&A 11 session)

4) How does one implement the grace-based bible school program as part of the local church's discipleship program?

- ✓ **Begin with Firm Foundations**
- ✓ **Use this as an orientation discipleship program**
- ✓ **The leader is the key to its success**
- ✓ **Therefore it is important that they complete Phase 1 of the course first and complete the required assessment paper for the 3 books**
- ✓ **It is vital that notes are only used together with the videos for each session**
- ✓ **Involve the students in class participation**
- ✓ **100% attendance is essential for the course**

5) In a recent sermon you said God knows all about our past failings and loves us unconditionally

But the Bible says our sins and lawless deeds He remembers no more, they are cast into the depths of the sea, etc.

So shouldn't we say He knew our sin, rather than knows our sin?

***God is omniscient. He knows all things – past, present and future. He has complete knowledge of all things**

***When the Bible says He remembers our sins no more it means He will remember them *against us* no more**

***This fact demonstrates the greatness and the depth of His love. He knows more about us than anyone else knows, yet He loves us more than any other person can**

6) In the parable of the Prodigal Son at the end of the story, the father says to the older son, '*...for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found*' (Luke 15:32, KJV)

How can we understand this? In what way was the younger son lost and dead, and in what way did he then become alive and found if he hadn't lost his sonship before?

- ✓ **Always remember the purpose of a parable**
- ✓ **A parable is not meant to state doctrine but to *illustrate* a truth**
- ✓ **So if a parable seems to be stating a truth which is contrary to that taught by the apostles then we are reading it wrong**
- ✓ **Jesus told parables to illustrate one main truth. That is what we should be looking for**
- ✓ **Almost always that truth is stated at the very beginning of the parable or the very end**

- ✓ **In Luke 15:1-2 we read, 'Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them"'**
- ✓ **They had a very wrong concept of God. They thought He wanted nothing to do with sinners**
- ✓ **Jesus told 3 parables because He wanted us to know what God feels about those who have lost their way. So the focus of the parable is not even primarily on us but on God**
- ✓ **This is the main point. We can emphasize other points from the parable only if they confirm sound doctrine taught elsewhere**

Regarding the words 'lost' and 'dead':

- ✓ **1) There is a difference between being lost to God (losing our salvation) and spiritually losing our way. The latter is intended here. We cannot be lost to God because Jesus promised, *'While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled'* (Jn.17:12), etc.**
- ✓ **And it is clear that by living a carnal life we can suffer 'loss'. E.g. *'If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire'* (1 Cor.3:15)**

- ✓ **The word 'dead' has more than one application in the New Testament. When applied to a believer it never refers to being spiritually dead**
- ✓ **E.g. '*But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives*' (1 Tim.5:6). The context is that the church had an obligation to support widows in the church who had no other means of support and who gave themselves to praying for the church. But it was under no obligation to support those who lived in self-indulgent pleasure, i.e. according to the flesh. Why support a lifestyle that is destined to be burned up?**
- ✓ **In this way the prodigal son was both lost and dead**

6) I know that prayer is a way of experiencing our relationship with God. But what does intercessory prayer look like?

We know that things happen when we pray for others, but does it mean God is unable to do those things unless we pray?

Also, does prayer change things in the invisible realm?

- ✓ **The best way to understand prayer under the new covenant is to study the prayers of Paul**
- ✓ **There is a discrepancy between how he prayed and many modern prayers**
- ✓ **Most prayers today are no more than 'wish-lists', 'shopping lists' and 'fix-lists'**
- ✓ **These modern concepts of prayer are unbiblical, unhelpful and not glorifying to God**
- ✓ **Prayer is not an arm-wrestle with God to get Him to bend His will to ours**
- ✓ **We are not 'storming the gates of heaven'. There is no such thing as 'prayer that unlocks heaven'. Heaven was opened to us 2000 years ago by the words: 'It is finished'!**

- ✓ **'Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness' (A W Pink)**
- ✓ **It is the means by which we enjoy relationship with our heavenly Father**
- ✓ **In prayer we demonstrate our dependence upon God and learn to align ourselves with His purposes**
- ✓ **God does not ask us to pray because He is powerless to act until we do. Rather, it is His invitation to involve us in His plans**
- ✓ **It's not telling God what I want but discovering His will and purposes for myself and others**

- ✓ *'Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him'*
(1 John 5:14-15)
- ✓ **Prayer is an environment where we receive the good that God has for us and others, not a place where we try to take something that might end up being bad for us and for others**
- ✓ **Bringing our needs to Him we are confident that He will answer them in whatever way He deems best in accordance with His purposes**

- ✓ **So, there are two ways we can pray. One is carnal, which places me in the middle. The other is spiritual, where we ask, 'What does God want?' 'Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name' (Jn.12:27-28)**
- ✓ **The Holy Spirit helps us to re-focus and to see the big picture. E.g. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you' (Matt.6:33)**

7) What did Paul mean by the words underlined?

'For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time'

(1 Cor.15:3-8)

- ✓ **Paul describes himself as someone who was untimely or prematurely born**
- ✓ **He only came to faith after Jesus had risen and ascended to heaven, whereas the other apostles were disciples before His death and resurrection**
- ✓ **The word means 'an abortive'. As a premature baby is smaller in size than one fully formed Paul was humbling himself in comparison to the Twelve who were with Christ for 3 years before His death and resurrection. This is clear from the next verse where he says, *'For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God'* (1 Cor.15:9)**

✓ Yet the resurrected Christ did appear to Paul and he makes it clear that his understanding of the gospel was in no way less an apostle than the others, *'For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles'* (2 Cor.11:5)