



AMBASSADORS
FOR CHRIST
INTERNATIONAL USA
Preach Christ. Edify His Church. Glorify God.

**SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES
GOVERNING THE
AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST
INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP**

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It is appropriate and necessary to define the basic Biblical and spiritual principles which gave rise to the ministry of AFCI and which are vital to the continuance of AFCI as a spiritual force for revival and evangelism. We all share the conviction that scripture must provide the precedents and principles for all AFCI policies even though we must structurally conform to the requirements and laws of the world.

This material is normative for AFCI and along with the Bible provides the standard by which any proposed policy or practice must be measured.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are not to be confused with natural talents. Spiritual gifts are supernaturally bestowed by God upon believers and can only be exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men." I Corinthians 12:4-6 (NIV)

A church or organization cannot give or direct these God-given, God-empowered gifts. They can only recognize and affirm them while praying for the workers and releasing them to exercise the gifts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in the fellowship of God's people.

"...in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach ..." Romans 12:5-7 (NIV)

It is a time of tremendous joy and fulfillment when other believers recognize and affirm a spiritual gift in a fellow believer, encouraging and strengthening him in the exercise of the gift.

The particular public gifts given to the Church for spiritual leadership and for the equipping of God's people are found in Ephesians 4:11,12.

"...he gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service...." Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV)

APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS

God is a God who works. Our Lord said, "My Father is always at his work...and I too am working" (John 5:17). So at the right time God sent His son to do His work. He came as the "Anointed One." He did not come on His own initiative.

"...the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing..." John 5:19 (NIV)

The days of the Messiah were limited and so he prepared some men to continue His work and he called them "apostles" (Greek apostolos, a sent-one). The twelve apostles sent by the Lord Jesus also passed off the scene, but the same Holy Spirit who empowered them remained to carry on the Father's grand plan of redemption through other men whom He would select and who would become "sent-ones." These "sent-ones" are described in Ephesians 4:11.

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers..." Ephesians 4:11 (NIV)

Apostles were for the establishing and guiding of the Church, prophets were for the "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" or edification of the Church (I Corinthians 14:3), and evangelists were for the extension of the Church.

Who then are apostles, prophets, and evangelists? They are God's workmen sent out by the Holy Spirit to do "the work" (Acts 13:2) to which He has called them. The responsibility of the Work is in their hands. They may be highly educated or poorly educated, they may be eloquent or of halting speech. They are not "sent-ones" because of their natural equipment but because God has worked in them to send them. One evangelist cannot handle figures or draw up goals and plans, or put together a budget, but is a powerful servant of God, distinguished everywhere by his spiritual wisdom and power. There is a sense in which the whole church and all its members exercise ministry based upon the gifts of the Holy Spirit. "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one just as He determines" (I Cor.12:11). But within the whole Body, God has chosen certain men for a special ministry - the Ministry of the Word for the building up of the Body of Christ. Paul spoke of being "separated unto the gospel." It is a ministry of interdependence and mutual accountability among those separated for this special work.

COMMISSION AND CONTROL

Acts 13:1-3 gives insight into God's workings for the extension of His kingdom. It is a fact that those with the ministry of a prophet are the first to recognize this gift in another. So also an evangelist. Thus we see the Holy Spirit at work among five 'prophets and teachers' who were together, fasting and praying.

"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Acts 13:2 (NIV)

Here we see that in the advance of the Church in its evangelistic and missionary enterprise the initiative and sovereignty of God is recognized and honored. This is even more emphasized by the use of two Greek words translated by the same English word but with quite different meanings.

"So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent (*apoluo*) them off. The two of them, sent (*ekpempo*) on their way by the Holy Spirit, went ..." Acts 13:3-4 (NIV)

There is no thought of this godly group of praying fasting men forming a council to direct the ministry and activities of the missionary team, nor even to take care of their practical affairs. The word 'apoluo' means "to release" for a journey or a mission while 'ekpempo' means "to send out on a mission." Men release but God sends! Because it was God's work it must be divinely initiated, divinely directed, and divinely empowered!

This does not mean that there was no continuing relationship between those who released them and those whom God was sending. On the contrary it was the strongest possible type of relationship, for while Barnabas and Saul were one in a fellowship of ministry and activity, both those who were going and those staying were all one in a fellowship of the Spirit for God's glory. This oneness was symbolized by the laying on of hands. By this they were saying, "When you two members of the Body go, all the other members go with you, your going is our going, and your work is our work." Thus they were expressing identification and oneness, but not authority and control. In fact, nowhere in Scripture do we find those set apart as 'sent-ones' portrayed as servants of an organization. The Holy Spirit called them and they followed His leading and guidance whether as individuals or as a company.

APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS, AND THE CHURCHES

Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament there was the assembly of God's people, universal and local. In the Old Testament the Universal Assembly was the whole people of God gathered or scattered. The local assembly was seen in the temple and the synagogues. In the New Testament the Universal Church is the Body of Christ worldwide comprising all believers, while the local church is the assembly of God's people in any given locality.

Both in the Old and New Testaments there are those who, while members of the People of God are called to speak as messengers of God to the Church wherever it may be found in its local form. Amos received such a calling in the Old Testament and met with rejection from the organized institutionalized religion of the day.

"Then Amaziah (*the priest*) said to Amos (*the prophet*), 'Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.'" Amos 7:12-13 (NIV)

To which the prophet replied,

"...I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' Now then hear the word of the LORD..." Amos 7:14-16 (NIV)

Thus, there were these prophets, sometimes teams of prophets, who were not subject to the political authorities and religious institutions of the day in respect either to their ministry or the message which they delivered. If there were "false prophets" they were rebuked and exposed by the true prophets. By their fruits they were known. The experience of the prophet Micaiah confronting the false prophet Zedekiah in the court of King Ahab illustrates this (I Kings 22:16-28).

In the New Testament similarly we see those who exercise a "prophetic" and evangelistic ministry, pronouncing God's Word and God's call to repentance. Throughout the Acts we see men going from place to place, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups, preaching and teaching in the churches (Acts 18:24,26), sometimes going through the churches to the regions beyond (Romans 15:23,24). Sometimes the group was of one nationality (Acts 14:1), and sometimes it was an international team (Acts 20:4-5). Such workers were in constant communication with the churches and reported to the spiritual leadership of the churches all that God had done with them.

When the aged Apostle John wrote to his "dear friend Gaius" he referred to these travelling missionaries as those who "for the sake of the Name went out, receiving no help from the pagans," and he urges Christians "to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth" (3 John 5-8).

There is no stronger relationship than such a fellowship in the Holy Spirit and in the common call and in the exercise of a shared ministry! No amount of organizing can ever be a substitute for such a fellowship. History is replete with illustrations of powerful spiritual movements being pressed into organizational structures only to find that, instead of the organization serving the ministry, the ministry begins to serve the organization. That which began as a mighty spiritual movement dependent upon the Holy Spirit becomes a well-oiled machine dependent upon man's skill, finally to become a monument to a magnificent past.

THE SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

In Scripture there is very little detail with respect to the financial and organizational support of the Ministry. Evidently what we so often regard as of supreme importance was something to which the Apostles made little reference.

All too often the success of a ministry is measured by its "financial health." If a ministry is in financial want or if the workers are not properly provided for by normal worldly standards the ministry is brought into disrepute. Paul himself suffered this kind of criticism. If Paul's financial condition was a measure of God's blessing we would have to question his spirituality! But on the contrary he took his privations for the Gospel's sake as a mark and badge of discipleship.

"We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless." I Corinthians 4:10-11 (NIV)

Then he applies it to the Christians in Corinth by adding,

"I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you as dear children ... Therefore, I urge you to imitate me." I Corinthians 4:14-16 (NIV)

This seems to be a call to sacrificial living for the sake of the Kingdom. Any company of workers should be sure that the structuring of the finances of the organizational support system does not inhibit their personal dependence upon the love and faithfulness of God as they look to Him to supply their temporal needs. It is by direct dependence upon God that the worker's relationship is deepened and

his guidance determined. At the same time, if a worker is in a position to receive an abundance of financial support he must never think of this as his. In the context of a shared ministry, in the light of the apostolic example, and in view of the call to reach all peoples by all means, any resources entrusted to God's servant by God's people must be viewed not as personal income, but as a stewardship for which he will be accountable.

If the evangelist invites someone to help him or to provide some form of service for his ministry of the Word the evangelist must observe the Scripture,

"...the worker deserves his wages...." Luke 10:7 (NIV)

Paul the evangelist certainly felt his responsibility and found it a blessing to help provide for those whom he had invited to share with him in the Ministry.

"You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions." Acts 20:34 (NIV)

When it comes to the matter of the organization and support of ministry the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, is a textbook of management principles and organizational method. Jethro's advice to Moses with regard to delegation, and Nehemiah's brilliant supervision of the construction of the wall of Jerusalem are examples of organization brought into the service of the Kingdom.

In the New Testament, however, the scarcity of references to the organizational and financial support of the apostolic teams makes it difficult to form a complete picture, but there are glimpses of ways in which organizational and financial activities served the ministry of the Word.

1. **Organizational Support.** Because the Work was in the hands of those men whom God sent to do the work there was a minimum of organizational structure. What organization there was existed to serve the ministry of the Word, and the ministry was for the building up of the spiritual life of the churches. If those who are called to minister the Word serve only an organization, a mission, or an institution, and not the Body as a whole, they lose the headship of the Lord.

Although we see the Lord dividing His workers into different companies their work was always on the grounds of the one Body under Jesus the Head. Thus, we see in the Acts companies of workers going out to do the work of church planting, church renewal, and evangelism, and finding their oneness as a company or fellowship on a spiritual basis, not on the basis of organization. Organizations structured for their own survival and growth tend to divide the Body of Christ while companies of workers drawn together on a spiritual basis tend to heal and reconcile the members of the Body. It is a remarkable thing that AFCI workers have been able to cross over many of the denominational and organizational barriers which divide the Body of Christ. This is because God has drawn together a company of workers who work for the up-building of the Body under the Headship of Christ rather than for an organization. An organizational attitude tends to say, "He is our worker," while the attitude of those drawn together on a spiritual basis says, "He is the Lord's worker." In the latter case it is the Lord who determines everything. He orders and men agree and obey. Before we say anything about organization we must understand these principles.

Organization appears in simple form when we observe Barnabas and Paul making arrangements for John Mark to accompany them on their missionary journey "as their helper" (Acts 13:5). Later at the seaport town of Troas the missionary team is joined by Dr. Luke. There is no indication that Luke ever preached though he may well have witnessed and testified. Paul spoke of him as "Luke the physician." Luke was no doubt another of these invaluable "helpers" in the ministry.

Again we see Paul setting up an organizational system for the orderly collection of money from the churches in Macedonia to meet a need in Judea, and then asking the churches to appoint responsible men to assist him in this service - more helpers.

Organization took a more definite form in the local churches. Paul told Titus to "set in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town" (Titus 1:5). But when it came to the companies of itinerant workers, what little organization there was appears to have been primarily in organizing secretaries for Paul and a postal service to circulate messages and information, as well as organizing ways and means of getting financial or material help to the evangelists (Philippians 2:25,30). When there was organization it served to help the ministry of the Word in one way or another. This will be even more clear as we look at the financial affairs of the New Testament evangelists.

2. **Finance and Accounting.** Jesus said "You cannot serve God and mammon." In the kingdom God Himself is the source of power while in the world mammon is the source of power. If we are to avoid being mastered by money we must learn from Scripture what it means to be mastered by God. The evangelist who uses his ministry to make money is in fact mastered by mammon and to that degree is no longer a servant of God. "You cannot serve both!" So our attitude to financial matters is a good measure of our relationship to God. If the work is initiated and sustained by God it will be spiritual, and everything about it will be spiritual.

In God's Word there is no instance of one sent by God receiving a regular salary to do the "Work." Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with receiving a salary. The attitude of the heart is all important. Nevertheless a regular salary paid by an organization holds for an evangelist the danger of looking to an organization to meet his needs rather than to the Lord. And so there is the emphasis on the exercise of faith, each one looking to God for the supply of his personal needs and the needs of the ministry for which God has made him responsible. The fact is that no man in the apostolic tradition, or sent by God, should regard any man or organization as his employer even if he does receive a salary. He should take literally Jesus' words, "One is your Master," and should trust Him for all that the doing of His will requires. Only as the worker trusts God will the work be of God. The practical dependence upon God to supply all I need to fulfill the ministry He has entrusted to me, keeps me in the closest possible relationship to Him. Furthermore, it has been rightly said, "He who holds the purse holds authority." If we look to men to support us we will be controlled by men. If we trust in men to supply our need we will be influenced by men. Yet Paul said,

"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Galatians 1:10 (NIV)

The God-sent worker must have faith in God alone.

"It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes." Psalms 118:8-9 (NIV)

It is not only better, it is the scriptural and spiritual way to ensure that we are in the center of God's will.

The attitude of the supporting giver is just as important as the attitude of the worker. In the Old Testament the tithes of the Israelites were given as to God. When they neglected to give God said, "You robbed Me", and when they asked, "How did we rob you?" He replied, "In tithes and offerings." Therefore although the people handed their offerings over to the Levites they viewed their offerings as being given to the Lord. And the Levites saw their needs for their life and priestly service as being met out of God's storehouse. They did not see themselves as employed by men but as called and supplied by God.

"Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." I Corinthians 9:13-14 (NIV)

"Living from the Gospel" means that just as the Lord commanded the Israelites to give their tithes and offerings to God, and from this God supplied the needs of the priests, so God expects His children to bring offerings to Him for the ministry of the Gospel and from this God meets the need of His workers and the ministry of the Word. In this way it is God who moves the giver, and it is God to whom the evangelist looks. As the hearts of believers are touched by God they hand over gifts to His servants, and the servants, while they receive gifts through men see them as from God, and give Him thanks and praise. It is upon Him that their eyes are fixed.

It is as the giver sees his gift as being an offering to God that his attitude is kept right before God. He sometimes gives with a leading from God along certain lines and so specifies in what direction his gift be applied, but he knows that it is not for him to decide how the work should be done. In the spiritual realm it is the Lord's worker who controls the money, not the money the worker. Of course, if the giver is a spiritual man the evangelist will gladly seek his counsel, but his advice must be sought on the grounds of his spirituality and godly wisdom, not on the grounds of his gift.

**"...we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed - God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else."
I Thessalonians 2:4-6 (NIV)**

We see a beautiful flow of life within the Body of Christ, from one member to another, according to the gift given to each, but all working the same "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

From the very beginning of our Lord's public ministry there were those (some of real substance) who came along side to help Him and his chosen apostles.

"Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means." Luke 8:3 (NIV)

Jesus saw that this money was put in the care of a person familiar with accounting and even though this particular person proved unworthy of this trust, the fact is that someone in the apostolic band was made responsible for the accounts.

Then again there was the outpouring of material giving by the believers following Pentecost. It became such a torrent that the workers were being distracted from "prayer and the ministry of the Word." They therefore arranged for some other men to be appointed to whom they could delegate the administrative responsibilities. These "helpers" would be finally accountable to the ministry leaders for the performance of their work but at the same time the ministry workers bowed to the Lord of the Church when they saw Him calling forth one of the administrative helpers to be a powerful preacher of the Word (Acts 6:5,6,8-11).

The AFCI, Inc. office in Atlanta is called the International Service Center serving the needs of the AFCIF ministers of the Gospel in the USA and around the world. Thus, the AFCI Center in USA is not a control center directing the ministers but is a serving unit of the organization. The apostolic bands had only one headquarters and that was in heaven at the throne where resides all spiritual authority.

The missionary and evangelistic work recorded in Acts and in the epistles throws further light on finances and accounting in the early travelling groups of evangelists. Paul only referred to support and help from the believers in connection with his missionary journeys, and he definitely gave more emphasis to raising up prayer support than to raising up financial support.

**"I urge you brothers ... to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me."
Romans 15:30 (NIV)**

However, there are references which indicate that there is a place for inviting Christians to participate financially in our missionary enterprise and in giving to special needs.

- a. **Romans 15:20-24.** Paul expresses his desire to visit the church in Rome "...so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong..." (Romans 1:11). He clearly intends "...to preach the gospel where Christ was not known so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation." (Romans 15:20) He gives another reason for coming to Rome where there was indeed an already established church: "...I go to Spain [an hitherto un-reached area]. I hope to visit you while passing through (Rome) and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while" (15:24). Paul can only mean that he is expecting material help in his missionary journey to Spain.
- b. **I Corinthians 16:5-9.** Writing to the Christians in Corinth, Paul shares his plan to journey through Macedonia, no doubt visiting the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea for their encouragement. Then he will proceed to Corinth hoping to spend some time there. "Perhaps I will stay with you awhile ... so that you can help me on my journey" (16:6). His hope is to go to Ephesus where "...a great door for effective work has opened to me..." (16:9). Again we see Paul inviting the Christians to share in his missionary journey in a substantial way.

- c. Philippians 4:14-19.** Paul is full of loving commendation for his friends in Philippi. He seems to also indicate a little sorrow that the church at Philippi was the only church to send help and was moved "...to share in my troubles" (4:14). "...(Y)ou sent me aid again and again when I was in need." (4:16) He is not "...looking for a gift, but ...for what may be credited to your account" (4:17) because of the spiritual fruit resulting from their investment. He reminds them in 4:19 to look to God, not to man, for the supply of personal needs.
- d. II Corinthians 8 & 9.** In these chapters Paul is definitely engaged in "fund raising," not for himself but for needy Christians in another country. These two chapters are full of instruction on this matter of raising resources to meet a need.
- i. It was to meet a real need.
 - ii. The "fund raiser" had no direct personal gain from the resources his efforts generated for others.
 - iii. The example of giving is presented as nothing less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who gave all (8:9).
 - iv. The spirit of giving must come from sincere love (8:8), glad generosity (9:5); and a cheerful attitude (9:7).
 - v. The giving should not be the result of pressure ("...not reluctantly or under compulsion...") but as the individual "... has decided in his heart to give" (9:7). Willingness to give, according to what one has, pleases God.
 - vi. The accountability must be with absolute integrity established by several trustworthy witnesses appointed by the community of Christians so that everything is public and honorable (8:16-24).
 - vii. Christians should be challenged to give in dependence upon the resources of God so that their giving becomes an adventure of faith (9:8-10).
 - viii. Giving should be done with a view to creating more of an equality among God's people (8:13-15).
 - ix. Such giving will result in praise to God for the loving and generous obedience of His people (9:12-15).
- e. III John 5-8.** The Apostle John is evidently referring to missionaries or evangelists who "for the sake of the Name they went out, receiving no help from the pagans" (v.7). He commends the church for receiving them and helping them "even though they are strangers to you" (v.5). He says "we ought therefore to show hospitality to such men" (v.8) as another way by which "we may work together for the truth" (v.8). When they leave on their mission, John says, "You do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God" (v.6).

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE WORK

1. God's call for Christians to make contributions is in relation to either the ministry of a God-sent missionary or particular missionary project or for someone else's special need.
2. There does not seem to be any case of an apostle asking for money to meet his own personal need, although Paul does thank the Philippians for meeting his personal need. The Apostle John urges believers to meet the need of the evangelists but does not mention his own need.
3. The spiritual principles underlying giving to the Lord are clearly taught.
4. Where money is specifically given by churches for a project it is scrupulously accounted for to the churches or Christians who contributed.
5. The Apostle Paul does invite participation in his missionary journeys.
6. Real gratitude and thanks is expressed to the givers.
7. There is constant reporting on the ministry, and in this way he shares with the givers how he was led to apply resources in fulfilling his God-given ministry.
8. There are repeated requests for prayer for the Apostle and the ministry.
9. Praise and thanksgiving is given to God for the fellowship of the believers and for their giving to meet needs.

At the risk of repetition, we must emphasize that the workers, called and equipped by God for the ministry of the Word are solely responsible for the Work into which they have been led by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by the Body within which they exercise their ministry. They look to God for the supply of the need and so are accountable to God for the use of these resources. At the same time they recognize a responsibility to those whose faith-offerings God has used to supply the need.

"We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men." II Corinthians 8:20-21 (NIV)

We also of AFCI are taking pains to do what is right not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men. The servants of God who minister the Word must, above all men, be the most open, the most honorable.

"Therefore since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception ... On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." II Corinthians 4:1-2 (NIV)

AFCI honors the intent of donors. All funds given, including those specifically designated, are to be handled with integrity and on the basis of policies agreed upon within each AFCI national ministry.

**"All the way my Savior leads me.
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy
Who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell;
For I know what e'er befall me
Jesus doeth all things well."**

LEADERSHIP

The question of leadership has been raised several times in discussion among us. It is important that we understand leadership from a spiritual point of view. If we are primarily a company of itinerating ministers of the Gospel then our understanding of leadership will be subject to a Scriptural definition.

Leadership immediately raises the question of authority, a matter upon which Jesus had cause to comment.

"...You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 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." Mark 10:42-45 (NIV)

Jesus says that the "authority" of spiritual leadership is not the same as authority in the organizations of the world. This passage tells us several things about leadership.

1. If a person enjoys bossing or "lording it over" other people he is disqualified from spiritual leadership.
2. The spiritual leader has the best and highest interests of those whom he leads on his heart as his responsibility.
3. The spiritual leader not only has the needs of those whom he leads on his heart but he gives himself to serving those needs even to the point of giving his life for them.

Whatever this passage may teach it is clear that spiritual leadership involves serving those we lead.

But then what about authority?

There would appear to be two kinds of authority, official authority and spiritual authority. The former is an authority conferred upon a person by virtue of his position in an organization, the latter an authority intrinsic to certain spiritual qualities.

In an organization authority is derived from the position held in the organization. This is official authority. Hopefully, if it is a good spiritual organization, the authority is both official and spiritual. But from an organizational standpoint the authority is basically official. Whether the person holding the position is spiritual or not his organizational authority remains the same because it is basically official. This means that because he holds an office he exercises authority, and the moment he leaves his office his authority ceases. It is clear that such authority is purely organizational and is not inherent in the man himself. If he holds the position of director then he directs even if lack of spirituality really disqualifies him from leadership. So in an organization it is position that determines authority. Where it is a movement raised up of God one would hope that only spiritual men would be appointed to an office in the organization which serves the ministry. This is why a ministry-organization must always be under and subject to the spiritual leadership of the movement.

When an organization serving a ministry becomes an institution in its own right, the time will soon come when the authority of an office will clash with spiritual authority.

In a Spirit-initiated fellowship of ministers of the Gospel authority is exercised among them but it is spiritual authority, not organizational authority. When it is an authority based upon spiritual wisdom, a deep knowledge of the Lord and proven experience in the ways of God, others willingly submit to this kind of authority publicly. This was the kind of authority Paul exercised. It did not originate in organizational position. If he had lost his spirituality he would have lost his authority. In the Bible the movements of God only know one kind of leadership and that is spiritual leadership exercising spiritual authority. Where emphasis shifts to organizational authority the Spirit is grieved and the movement becomes an institution.

We have the idea that we must have organizational authority and that spiritual authority is an extra. But Paul, measured by any standard, is one of the great leaders of all time. Under his leadership the Christian movement spread and was deeply planted across several provinces of the Roman Empire. His authority was entirely spiritual, derived not from an organizational position but from his commission as sent by God. At every point he meets the qualifications stated by our Lord in Mark 10:42-45.

1. He had no desire to "lord it over others" but regarded himself as

"....less than the least of all God's people..." Ephesians 3:8 (NIV)

**"....the least of the apostles (*not even deserving*) to be called an apostle..."
I Corinthians 15:9 (NIV)**

2. He carried on his heart the best and highest interests of those who followed him.

"Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?" II Corinthians 11:28-29 (NIV)

3. He gave himself to serving those needs even to the point of giving his life for them.

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." II Corinthians 4:5 (NIV)

"So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well ... and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening." II Corinthians 12:15-19 (NIV)

Paul was indeed a spiritual leader of the highest order. And his co-workers followed him not under the compulsion of organizational authority but as spiritual men recognizing God-appointed authority. Those who became carnal were not compelled to obey him, for his authority was a spiritual authority, not the official authority of an organization.

Here are a few passages indicative of Paul's spiritual leadership and influence.

"...Timothy ... Paul wanted to take him along on the journey." Acts 16:1-3 (NIV)

Timothy, recognizing the spiritual strength and wisdom of Paul willingly submitted to the advice of the elders and the desire of Paul and came under Paul's spiritual leadership.

"During the night Paul had a vision...after Paul had seen the vision we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the Gospel to them." Acts 16:9-10 (NIV)

Silas, Timothy, and Luke so respected Paul's deep relationship with the Lord and his spiritual discernment that they did not hesitate to submit themselves to his spiritual leadership as they set out to sea on a new missionary venture.

"...he decided to go back through Macedonia.... accompanied by Sopater... ..Aristarchus and Secundus... GaiusTimothy, Tychicus and Trophimus...."
Acts 20:3-4 (NIV)

Paul's spiritual stature and ministry had drawn to him other workers who willingly came under his spiritual leadership and who sacrificed an independent way in preference for participation in a body of like-minded workers.

Varieties of team relationships in the ministry are seen in one brief passage of Scripture.

"Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me ... If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you ... Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers. Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity." I Corinthians 16:3,4,10-12 (NIV)

Here we see three levels of team relationship:

1. The relationship which exists during the time of a short-term ministry project. In this case the men chosen by the church go with Paul to take the special collection to God's people in Judea.
2. The deep abiding relationship of a continuing partnership in the Gospel within which Timothy

acknowledges and responds to Paul's spiritual leadership over many years.

3. The occasional relationship of men who have their own distinctive ministries and yet who cooperate in ministry for the strengthening of the Body of Christ when they have opportunity. This was the relationship of Apollos, the eloquent preacher from Alexandria, and the missionary Paul. In this case Apollos, although he no doubt recognized Paul's spiritual leadership among many of God's servants, felt no obligation to yield to Paul's urgings. Apollos, a God-called evangelist, was looking to God and fulfilling his own appointed ministry under the leadership of the same Christ from whom Paul took his orders.

In all of this we see the dynamic of men who have learned to walk in the Spirit together, sometimes serving as a team in one place, sometimes fulfilling a lonely mission, sometimes moving with Paul, sometimes with Apollos. AFCI must endeavor to preserve this happy service to the Lord who calls us together as a company, a fellowship of preachers and teachers of the Word and those God-called helpers working with them in the ministry, a glad bondage to the Lord and to each other, which is freedom indeed.

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