

13 | LEADERS IN THE EKKLESIA



Throughout the Bible we find stories of how God appoints leaders. In both the Old and New Testaments, these leaders are often given an assignment, sometimes linked to an area or a group of people. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus chooses twelve men to follow Him. In the training Jesus gives them, I see three stages: Follow, Disciple and Serve.

Follow

This means "watching what Jesus is doing. Experiencing, being with Him, listening to what He says and how He acts in different situations. You see many people in the Bible following Jesus.

Everywhere Jesus went, they tried to catch a glimpse of Him or listen to His teachings.

Usually, the followers came for healing or some other miracle. Jesus clearly had a different expectation of followers than those He chose. *(Matthew 4:23)*

Disciple

Jesus invites twelve disciples to travel with Him. The disciples who were chosen, later joined by a somewhat larger group of people, are allowed to come much closer. They travel with Him and participate in the second phase of training - I call it Disciple. In this, Jesus not only looks at whether they are following Him, but they are given clear instructions. In this phase, they are watching to see if they are doing what He asks of them.

The followers do not necessarily want to be like the Master, but they do want to receive the blessings. **The disciples learn by following who the Master is and want to become like Him.** *(Matthew 4:18-22)*

Serve

In Luke 9:1 and 10:1, the disciples are given the authority to go out on their own - this phase I call Serve. **In this, the disciples are sent out and allowed to serve others.** *(Acts 9:1-4)*

Ekklesia - three groups

In the Ekklesia, it is important to distinguish these three groups. In each group there will be participants who come primarily to discover, to receive blessings and to belong. Sometimes these are very wounded people who especially need love and acceptance. These people have not really come to change. Yet Jesus never rejects these people; they are simply allowed to belong.

There are also participants who want to be like Jesus and be trained. These people get extra attention and receive much more explanation in the principles of the Kingdom. This is best shaped at a different time than during your Ekklesia meetings.

Elders

As participants in the group grow, you see that Jesus also selects some to lead others. There are two characteristics for these leaders in the Bible:

1. these people are full of the Spirit and faith
2. they are well known to the people. We also read that the apostles send out leaders who meet these conditions to go to the new Ekklesias. (*Acts 6:3-4*)

The living temple

The believers who come into the Ekklesia are not seen as guests but as household members sanctified by Jesus. Each believer is seen as a living stone. They all have gifts and talents that may be used to form a living temple together with Jesus in the midst. The apostles and prophets lay a foundation; these are the principles of the Kingdom of God. And the foundation rests on Jesus Himself as the cornerstone (*Ephesians 2:19-20*).

Paul writes about the Ekklesia in Thessalonica that the believers have a powerful faith, that there is love and steadfastness. Paul' added his teaching and demonstration of strength by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Ekklesia became strong.

Apostles, prophets and the elders

In Ephesians 4, we read that there are ministries to equip believers and leaders (elders). These ministries are given so that believers mature in their faith and are not constantly tossed back and forth by all kinds of teachings. It appears that those active in these ministries travel back and forth between the various Ekklesias to support the elders leading those Ekklesias.

There remains a relationship between the Ekklesia led by elders and the apostles and prophets who started the congregations. Thus, the apostles have a network of Ekklesias. Instructions are also given from that home base. On the main themes at play in the Ekklesias, the apostles continue to exert influence, for example through visits and letters, so the apostles certainly still have influence on the founded Ekklesias, but in most areas there is freedom. The apostles see to it that the foundation in Christ is sound, but otherwise there are few rules. The apostles and their team equip and set free, give confidence and support where needed. (*Ephesians 4:11-16*)

EXERCISE:

1. Do you recognize apostolic and prophetic leaders in your life and in our country? If so, what characteristics of their apostolic leadership attract you?
2. Examine your Ekklesia, do you recognize the differences in participants? Who are followers, who are disciples? And how can you best equip these participants?
3. Do you experience freedom in your church or Ekklesia, teaching that equips, empowers and frees you to function in your calling? How does that happen?



LESSON LEARNED:

Jesus is the Cornerstone. He is the King of His Kingdom. Jesus appoints apostles and prophets to lay a good foundation. People are the living stones of a spiritual building in which the Spirit will dwell.

