

***Partnership***  
***One With Another***

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# **Contents**

<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Chapter 1 Koinonia - Partnership</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Chapter 2 Allelon: One Another</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>Chapter 3 Our Ministry</i></b>	<b>13</b>
<b><i>Chapter 4 Elders</i></b>	<b>17</b>
<b><i>Chapter 5 Serving The Gift To One Another</i></b>	<b>21</b>
<b><i>Chapter 6 New Testament House Churches</i></b>	<b>25</b>
<b><i>Chapter 7 House Churches Today</i></b>	<b>31</b>
<b><i>Chapter 8 Plurality</i></b>	<b>33</b>

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## Introduction

It is written in Luke 4:4, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Satan has from the beginning attempted to suppress the word of God. Honest, unbiased presentation of the word of God is rare. Through the past two centuries, there have been brief bursts of progress in honest presentation of the word of God. In each instance Satan has succeeded in building a religion that exalts the person that presented the true word of God.

The truths of the Bible must be very carefully extracted from poor translations and traditions. The truth must be presented boldly in spite of opposition. As workman we must rightly divide the word of truth, not by the word of men, but "by every word of God." (Luke 4:4)

We are called out of the Devil's world into God's Church; a counter culture that stands in stark contrast to the world around us. We have become a new community with a distinct purpose: The ministry of reconciliation. God's promises to the church as a whole are delivered through individuals who choose to believe them, and then operate those received promises in partnership with other like-minded believers.

We have not been called out of the world to play organizational ego games, but to stand firm in our partnership with God through Jesus Christ and with one another. If we assemble together for any other reason, we are not the church but part of the world around us. Indeed, the purpose of our assembling together is to edify (build up) each individual until we all reach the maturity of Christ. Only when each individual is being edified, is our assembly the church of God and not the assembly of Acts 19:32.

The central issue of the church is *koinonia* (partnership). God has called us into partnership with him. He has called us out of the society we were physically born into and into a new and better society called the body of Christ, the church. In the church, we are instructed to be in partnership with each other. It is to be in partnership with one another impossible if we are not in partnership with God. To understand the church we must understand our *koinonia* (partnership) with God through Christ and with one another.

## Chapter One: Kiononia - Partnership

The Greek word koinonia comes from the word koinos, which means, "shared." In our time, the concept of koinonia is best understood as "partnership." A partnership requires shared commitment and benefits. Our partnership is a dual commitment; we can be in partnership with each other because we are in partnership with God through Jesus Christ.

In this chapter we are going to look at the scriptures where the words koinonia and koinos appear in relation to the church. These verses show our partnership with God through Christ Jesus: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called into fellowship (koinonia-partnership) of his son Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 1:9)

First and foremost, we need to remember that "God is not a man that he should lie." (Numbers 23:19) God is the faithful partner, and His word is the truth in every situation. Our commitment may waiver but God never relinquishes His promise to be faithful. We are called of God, according to His purpose into koinonia, partnership. The partnership is through His son, (1) Christ Jesus, who is our only mediator with God. ... and truly our fellowship (partnership) is with the Father and with the son, Jesus Christ. I Jn 1:3 We are in partnership with our brother and joint heir, Jesus Christ, because our Father God called us. We have become partakers of the divine nature, (It's Christ in you) being called out of the world and into the light of sonship. (3) "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Our commitment to the partnership is a commitment to walk in the light. Romans 14:23 says that anything that is not of believing is sin, i.e., darkness. If we say that we have fellowship (partnership) with Him, and walk in darkness we lie, ...I Jn 1:6

One verse that is commonly misunderstood because of the religious traditions built around the word "communion" is I Corinthians 10:16. Instead of understanding that the Lord's supper is a time to remember and discern our partnership with (1 II Timothy 2:5 2 Colossians 1:27 3 I John 1:5) the body and blood of Christ, it has become an idolatrous ceremony.

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (partnership) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (partnership) of the body of Christ? I Cor 10:16*

How wonderful to remember that it was because God loved us that we are in partnership and by Christ's stripes we were (1)healed. With this understanding, the following verses concerning our sharing in Christ's suffering become clear.

We do not have to suffer as he did. Our partner and brother suffered for us and we share fully the benefits. Our partnership in Christ's body and blood (his suffering) is God's provision for our needs, both physically and spiritually. We appropriate the benefits of our partnership by believing God's word. With that understanding, these verses become clear:

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship (partnership) of his sufferings, ... Phil 3:10*  
*And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers (partners) of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. II Cor 1:7 (1 I Peter 2:24)*

Two more scriptures which state our partnership with God through Christ Jesus are:

*...the communion (partnership) of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*  
II Cor 13:14

*And to make all see what is the fellowship (partnership) of the mystery,...*  
Eph 3:9

As partners in the mystery, we are part of the body of Christ. Colossians 1:27 states that the "mystery ... is Christ in you, the hope of glory." In addition to the blessings that we enjoy in partnership with God, we are to be partners with one another. Our relationship with one another as believers is dependant upon our relationship with God. We can not be effective partners with each other if we are not committed to our partnership with God.

*But if we walk in the light, as He is the light, we have fellowship (partnership) one with another. I Jn 1:7*

God is light. Our commitment must be to live in that light and manifest the light to one another. Therefore we are exhorted: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:

*...for what communion (partnership) hath light with darkness?*  
II Cor 6:14

We do not have any partnership with unbelievers at all. We are committed to and born of God. Unbelievers are under the rule of the devil. To be yoked together with unbelievers causes a division in your commitment to God. No man can (1) serve two masters. James tells us that a double minded man (2) is unstable in all his ways. When we are yoked to two different commitments that pull in opposite directions, we lose our focus on our commitment to our true partner, God. To become effective partners with God and with one another, we must do the things pointed out in verse 6 of the epistle to Philemon.

*That the communication (partnership) of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*  
Philemon 6

Our partnership of believing becomes operable by our coming to a full understanding and discernment of the rights and power that we have in Christ Jesus. Our partnership becomes operational when we manifest those rights and power. We receive potential power when we are born again of God's (3) Spirit. We then have Christ in us. In that single unspeakable (4) gift is all the power that God promises to us. We must exercise that power for God to energize it and bring His promises into fruition. We can be effective partners only when we believe to (5) operate the manifestations of the Spirit and carry out our ministry of reconciliation. (1 Matthew 6:24 2 James 1:8 3 Colossians 1:27 4 II Corinthians 9:15 5 I Corinthians 12:7-11)

How effective we are as the church, is directly proportional to how effective we are as individual operators of the gift of holy Spirit. Note the references to partnership in the following verses:

*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship (partnership) with us:... I Jn. 1:3*

*For your fellowship (partnership) in the gospel from the first day until now;... Phil. 1:5*

*...if any fellowship (partnership) of the Spirit,... Phil. 2:1*

*If thou count me therefore a partner, receive his as myself. Philem. 17  
...they gave unto me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (partnership).... Gal. 2:9*

In the early days of the church as recorded in the book of Acts there was tremendous growth and deliverance from bondage. Not since has the church seen such explosive results. Reasons for that are recorded in this verse:

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, (partnership) and in breaking of bread and prayers. Acts 2:42*

Four things are listed that the early Christians continued steadfastly in: (2) One, they hungered for the teaching of the messengers of Jesus Christ. There were about 8000 men and their families. (1 II Corinthians 5:18 2 Apostle is transliterated from apostolos which means "messenger or one sent.") It must have taken weeks for the messengers to get around to all the household fellowships to teach. Those teachings are more readily available to us than it was to the early church. There were no telephones, tape players, or TVs. It was all one on one, word of mouth. They thrived on the word of God as spoken by each other.

Two, they continually operated the gift of holy Spirit in partnership with each other. Their calling was out of the society around them, and into a new partnership society that provided for the needs of every member. That is why we see the word koinonia (partnership) used in relation to the sharing of money, goods, food, etc. regarding believers in the following verses:

*For it pleased them of Macadonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution (to demonstrate their partnership) to the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. Rom. 15:26*

*Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and the fellowship (partnership) of the ministry to the saints. II Cor. 8:4*

*...and your liberal distribution (partnership) unto them... II Cor. 9:13*

*But to do good and to communicate (demonstrate your partnership) forget not. Heb. 13.6*

If there is one member of the partnership lacking, then the partnership is not operating according to God's word.

Three, we see in Acts 2:42 the breaking of bread together. The sharing of food when believers come together is part of the commitment one to another. It is the understanding of the orientalism, covenant of salt, i.e., commitment to

one another in a partnership. The lord's supper should be done at a time when all are like minded and probably not at a meal. They ate together, they lived together, they worked together, they believed together, they were partners.

And four, in Acts 2:42 they prayed together. Our private prayer, whether with understanding or in tongues, is part of our partnership with God through Christ. As we operate our power before God we can pray together and for one another to great avail. Jesus Christ said "if two of you agree on earth as touching anything that they should ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Therefore, if we walk in the light, (partnership with God) as He is the light, we have partnership with one another. Our partnership one with another is all the things that we are committed to do with and to each other. A good cross section of the things we are to be doing in our partnership can be seen in a study of the Greek word allelon, which means "one another."



## ***Chapter Two: Allelon - One Another***

If we live our life in the light that is God, then we can be partners with one another. Indeed, God has declared that "we are one body in Christ and every one of us are members of one another." The Greek word allelon means "one another." The Greek New Testament uses this word 100 times.

In the epistles, which are addressed to us in the age of grace, the word allelon is used over 40 times. In most cases it ties the members of the body of Christ together in one of the many activities of partnership.

In this chapter we are going to allow the word allelon to lead us through the epistles to discover how the blessing of our partnership with one another is manifested.

In the following verse allelon is translated in the KJV as mutual. "...that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." Rom. 1:12

A more understandable rendering is: I will be comforted by the right kind of believing that we share with one another. This is "one another" type of believing. It is only possible when we are in partnership together. As partners we must be like-minded:

*Be of the same mind one toward another. Romans 12:16*

Does that mean that I must submit my free will to you or you to me? Absolutely not! We are to put on the mind of Christ together. We are to think the thoughts that Christ would think in every situation. Sound impossible? It is not. We have Christ in us. We need to live in God's light, not in our own private darkness.

We must learn to live in the light and "be like minded one toward another according to the mind of Christ." When we are not like minded there is no partnership with one another. When we are like minded according to the mind of Christ, there is wonderful, peaceful, explosively productive partnership.

The first and most basic element of our partnership is what we first receive from God: Love.

*...Owe no man anything, but to love one another. Rom. 13:8*

*...abound in love one toward another. I Thes. 3:12*

*...ye are taught of God to love one another. I Thes. 4:9*

*...the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;...  
II Thes. 1:3*

*... consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:Heb.  
10:22*

*...see that ye love one another... I Pt. 1:22*

*...we should love one another.. I Jn. 3:11*

*...this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his  
son Jesus*

*Christ, and love one another;... I Jn. 3:23*

*...Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God I Jn. 4:7*

*...Beloved, If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.  
I Jn. 4:11*

*...If we love one another, God dwelleth in us... I Jn. 4:12*

*...I beseech thee,...that we love one another II Jn. 5*

Jesus said: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. By this (love) shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another." Think about that! Christ did not say that we need to wear black, or build great buildings, or serve a year in lower wild east Baltimore, to prove that we are good believers. The world has taught us that, not the word.

The key to comprehending this command "to love" is to understand what this word means. It is not "I love you if you love me" type of love. We have learned that in the world around us. But! Who is master of the world around us? Yes! That jerk, the devil is the master of the world at this time. 1John 13:34, 35 But the right kind of love is "agape", the love of God, that we received from

God when we were both unable to love and were unlovable. Because of His wonderful gift of Holy Spirit, (Christ in you) we now can love.

It is in the midst of the explanation of our operation of our holy Spirit that Paul writes in I Corinthians 13:2 that if he had believing to move mountains but had not agape love he was nothing.

The crux of our partnership is love. Unconditional love for one another. All other references to activities involved in our partnership with one another are information that fine tunes our understanding of the living love. Over half of I Corinthians 13 is spent on what the love of God is not. The love that we are to manifest in our partnership with one another is so contrary to our sin nature and natural knowledge that we have to be taught how to love. God teaches us by his example. He first loved us. Then we are taught by other's examples as they shed His love abroad:

*...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by holy Spirit which is given to us. Rom. 5:5*

It is the love of God in the renewed mind that causes us to "esteem one another better than yourself." We should value each other and defer honor one to another because we are partners who love one another.

In Ephesians 5:21 we are told to submit ourselves to one another. This is not what the world has taught us about submitting. Do we have to submit to a supposed brother when he elevates himself? Do we have to submit to organizational religion's rules and laws? Twice No! Jesus said, "One is your master, Christ; and all ye are brethren." In our partnership only one is elevated to a position: Only our brother and lord, Christ Jesus. The rest of us share in equal partnership with one another.

We are to put each other first, (by our own free will by love) thereby submitting to one another. Each time we elevate ourselves to a position better than our partners, we have stepped outside the bounds of our partnership. As a matter of truth, to reach out to lead, we must do so by serving one another through love. In like manner, we must bear one another's burdens. If that is not enough, we are also to forebear one another in love. Forebear in the Greek means "to hold up." Not only do we bear each other's burdens, we hold each other up too. (1 Romans 12:10 2 Also see I Peter 5:5 3 Matthew 23:8 4 Galatians 5:13 5 Galatians 6:2 6 Ephesians 4:2)

In the following verses we are instructed in things to be done in partnership:

*...Let us therefore not judge one another any more: Rom. 14:13*

*...Defraud ye not one another...(husbands and wives) I Cor. 7:5*

*...take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Gal. 5:15*

*...Let us not e desirous of vain glory, provoking one another,  
envying one another. Gal. 5:26*

*...Lie not one to another.. Col. 3:9*

*...Speak not evil one of another,.. Jms. 4:11*

*...Grudge not one against another,.. Jms. 5:9*

However, in partnership we are to forgive one another as God has forgiven us. We forgive one another because of Christ in us, not because we deserve it. God forgave us because of Christ, not our works.

We are to be kind one to another: Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another. Rom. 12:10 "Kindly affectioned" in the Greek is one word, "philosorgoi," which was used in New Testament times to connote the mutual love and respect of family members. This is to be combined with brotherly love, (I like you type of love), and agape love. (1 Ephesians 4:32 2 Ephesians 2:8-10)

In this vein, in I Peter 4:9 we are exhorted to use hospitality (literally, to have love of guests) one toward another, and to receive each other into our homes as equal partners. We are to receive each other as Christ received us. We did not do anything to deserve our partnership, yet God loved us and received us through Christ.

Therefore we are encouraged four times in the epistles to greet each other with a holy kiss. God, through Paul, commanded the members of the church to "seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." The purpose of our assembling together as partners is to edify (build up) one another.

*...follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Rom 14:19*

Edification through healing is the reason that James wrote that we are to confess our faults one to another. When we confess our sins to a true partner, that partner will admonish us with love by the word of truth, thereby edifying us. When we operate the love of God in the renewed mind, we comfort one another in partnership

## ***Chapter Three: Our Ministry***

There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. I Tim. 2:5 This arrangement that God has set in place is essential to the understanding of relationships within the church. God's word is reliable. When our thoughts and traditions place us in opposition to what God has spoken, then we are wrong. There is no mediator between God and us except the one Christ Jesus.

In Luke 22:24-27, Jesus makes it very clear that within the body of believers, there are to be no rulers exercising dominion over God's people. In the body of Christ, we lead by serving one another.

In Matthew 23:8, Jesus again clarifies this truth by stating: "One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." Paul, by revelation, in the book of Ephesians, tells us that, "God hath gave him (Christ) to be head over all, to the church, which is His body." Christ is the head. Christ is the mediator. Christ is our example.

*The nations have kings that rule over them ... but ye shall not be so.* Luke 22:25,26

Over the past 1900 years, men have set up innumerable organizations that have claimed to be representative of God's will. Christ said: "But ye shall not be so." This truth continues to stand. Any time a person or organization claims to represent "God's government" or claims to hold God's authority to rule over others, the word of God proves them false. We have one master, Christ; and we are brethren.

We are called into partnership with God through Christ Jesus, therefore we can be in partnership with one another. There are two Greek word groups that need to be understood to grasp the reality of the truth concerning our relationship with God and with one another.

Doulos and related words are the first group that are usually translated "servant". The second group of words revolve around diakonos which is also sometimes translated servant. To get to the truth of God's word, we must see the difference between these words.

In I Corinthians 7:23, we are told, "be ye not the servant of men," but in

Galatians 5:13, it is written, "serve one another." These two statements seem to be a contradiction. They are not. We are not to be a servant (doulos) to men, but as a doulos to God we are to be a servant, (diakonos) to one another in the body of Christ.

Doulos literally means "bond slave". In the Old Testament, according to the law, an Israelite slave had to serve his master seven years to buy his freedom. At the end of those seven years, he was set free. He then had a choice. He could go free, or he could choose to stay with his master as a slave for life. If he made the choice to stay a slave, he became a "doulos" or bond a slave by choice.

We are not under the law. The New Testament tells us that we are free and that we are not to be bond slaves to men. However, I Corinthians 7:23 also says that "we are bought with a price". The price was the death of Jesus Christ. He paid the ransom if full to make us free from sin and death. He made it available for us to be in partnership with God. He is our only mediator. To be a faithful partner with God we must (like the Old Testament slave) choose to "sell out to God." We need be a "doulos for God. He is the boss. We are the servant. (By choice) He bought us with the price of Jesus Christ to set us free. Now we can choose to be a doulos. To sell out to God is to reject all else but God and His word.

This is the first step toward being an effective partner with God. But this does not deal with what the Bible says about being partners one with another. For that understanding we must look to the words diakonos, diakonia, and diakoneo.

*Diakonos*: noun, means "a servant"

*Diakonia*: noun, means "service" or "what a servant does"

*Diakoneo*: verb, means "to serve" or "wait upon"

These three words are all forms of one word. That word is *diako*, which means "to run errands."

A ruler does not run errands, nor does an administrator. Within the body of Christ there are no administrators, only ministers. There is no leadership "offices" or "positions", only ministers. Christ is the only administrator, he is the head of the body. The body only has one head. We are the body. We serve

(diakoneo) one another under the leadership of Christ in us, the gift, holy Spirit.

Diakoneo is used in Matthew 4:11: "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him. Angels came and ministered, served, provided his needs, physically, mentally, spiritually to him.

In Luke 10:40: "But Martha was cumbered about much serving." "Serving" is *diakonia*. Martha was extremely busy being a hostess. (She was preparing food, providing places for people to sit, greeting people as they came in, etc.)

Diakonos's usage is extremely revealing in relation to the role of individuals within the partnership. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister". (diakonos) Matt. 20:25,26

Note the contrast that Jesus is emphasizing here. Dominion vs minister. The nations (Gentiles) have rulers (princes) that have privilege over them. We do not. In contrast to the nations, the body of Christ has but one ruler, God through His son, Christ Jesus. We are to serve one another as brethren. Not exalting any man above the other. We minister one to another in equal partnership.

All of us in the partnership have received the gift of Holy Spirit. Every one of us is responsible to minister to the other via the gift of Holy Spirit. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." I Peter 4:10

As *doulos* for God, we all have one ministry. We all have one errand to run for God, the ministry of reconciliation: "And all things (new) are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;" II Corinthians 5:18

We are all ministers (*diakonos*) of reconciliation. God, through Christ has made it available for people to be brought into partnership and fellowship with God. We have been commissioned and sent in place of Christ as messengers to the world with the word of reconciliation. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to

every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." II Corinthians 4:1-4

We have this ministry of reconciliation, which is understood via the word of God. We can carry out our ministry only to the extent that we understand, believe and carry out the rightly divided word of God.

From the very first, the devil has subverted the word of God. Deceitful use of the Word only comes from the devil. It is his goal to hide the truth of our power, position and ministry. By blinding the minds of multitudes throughout history, Satan has inspired mankind to build huge organizations with ruling positions to prevent us from rightly dividing the word of truth.

By crafty translation, the Bible becomes powerless. We must be very careful to remove the subtle mysticism from the translations of the word of God. We must cut through the organizational terminology intrinsic to the translations and go straight to the original meaning of the word of God:

Diakoneo is a generic word: It means the same thing every time it is used. It always means "to serve" or "to minister" in the original language.

Diakonos is rendered "to serve" tables in Acts 6:2. But in I Timothy 3:10, 13 where it is erroneously put as "office of a deacon", it still means "to serve" and should be understood accordingly.

All who are born again are diakonos (ministers). All have a diakonia (ministry). We all should be diakoneo. (serving or ministering)

The ministry of reconciliation is the central pivot at which point our partnership with one another revolves around. There are many aspects to this ministry. It is according to our believing of God's word, how we individually carry it out.

Removing pompous, man made titles is the key to understanding the many ministries that combine to accomplish our ministry of reconciliation. We render many "services" to carry out our "service" of reconciliation.

The Bible is a "how to" manual for ministers of reconciliation. It spells out how to carry out the many aspects of our ministry



## **Chapter Four: Elders**

The concept of leadership in the church is best typified by Joshua as he stood before the people of Israel and reminded them of God's faithfulness. He took a personal stand for God. He said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Within the nation of Israel, there were many different kinds of leaders. In the Old Testament, the governmental dominion over the people of God changed continuously.

The one constant throughout the history of the people of God in the Old Testament and the Gospel period is the Elder. An Elder in the Old Testament was a head of a household. He was the organizer and respected spokesman for the family.

It is no accident that the body of Christ is called the "family of God" and that all the churches in the New Testament are "household churches."

In the Old Testament a tribe was made up of many households. Each household had their Elder. Each tribe had an Elder that was called a "head."

Jesus Christ is the head. Each household church has an Elder. Jesus Christ the "Head" leads by love and example. An Elder leads by love and example.

There is a stark contrast between the world's concept of leadership and the way of an Elder. The world's way is understood in the Greek word *katakuriouontes* which is translated "ruler" and means to "exercise dominion" over a group of lesser individuals.

The way of an Elder is that of a loving head of the household, and is understood in the Greek word *proistemi*. *Proistemi* is also translated rule, but means to "care for" or "maintain." An Elder lovingly looks over and cares for his household. He does not exercise dominion over them, but instead, by love, leads by example.

In the New Testament the Elder is also called a shepherd and the household a flock. There are several passages in the New Testament that define the role of an Elder. The first that we are going to look at is in Acts 20. Paul calls the Elders of the household churches, in the area of Ephesus, together to say

good-bye and to exhort them to continue to stand for God. His instructions to Elders are:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28

A close examination of this verse is very revealing. Let's look at some of the key words:

Overseer	<i>episkopos</i>	to see over
To feed	<i>poimaino</i>	to shepherd
Flock	<i>poimnion</i>	flock of sheep
Over	<i>en</i>	in
Made	<i>etheto</i>	placed

An Elder is a shepherd. He is to do the work of a shepherd and feed and care for the flock that the Holy Spirit has placed him in. Peter also gave instructions to the Elders:

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. I Peter 5:1-3

Let's once again look at some key words:

Elders	<i>presbuteros</i>	Elder (old)
Feed	<i>poimaino</i>	to shepherd
Among	<i>en</i>	in
Oversight	<i>episkopos</i>	overseeing

Lords	<i>katakuriuo</i>	exercise dominion
Being	<i>ginomai</i>	becoming
Ensamples	<i>tupos</i>	pattern

With an understanding of the key words in Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:1-3, we can see that the way of an Elder is not the way of the world: "The Elders that are among you, Shepherd the flock which you are in, overseeing willingly, not by constraint; not exercising dominion over them, but becoming a pattern for the flock." This is how an elder leads. By example.

Another particularly revealing Bible passage is I Timothy 5:17,18:

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." I Timothy 5:17,18

Key words in these verses are:

Elders	<i>presbuteros</i>	Elders, older
Rule	<i>proistemi</i>	maintain, care for
Counted Worthy	<i>axioo</i>	to deem entitled
Honour	<i>time</i>	value, money paid
Especially	<i>malista</i>	particularly
Doctrine	<i>didaskalia</i>	teaching

After examining these three passages of scripture we can understand the role of an Elder in the church. By biblical definition, an Elder is a head of a household. Each local fellowship is a household in the family of God. This is why in I Timothy 3:5, the word tells us that "if a man know not how to care for his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"

The Elder is exhorted to shepherd the flock that the Holy Spirit has placed him in. A shepherd does not rule by coercion or force, but instead, leads by

loving example, caring for the flock. What is a shepherd (Elder) to feed his flock? The word of God. He must teach. Be it by formal teaching methods or by example of godly living, he is always teaching.

A shepherd protects the flock from "wolves" that are sent to divide, rip, tear, and destroy the household. He is to constantly oversee the church to be aware of needs, and opportunities to help someone to grow and produce fruit.

An Elder is to be respected by the flock. He is entitled to drink the milk of the flock that he shepherds. An Elder that labors in the word should be deemed entitled to double pay. (Financial support from the flock that he shepherds. The ox that treads out the corn is not muzzled, but is allowed to eat of the grain that it works to produce. That ox is not allowed to wander over to the next household and eat out of their grainary. The ox must be fed from the household he serves. A muzzled ox will soon starve to death, and produce no profit.

In the word of God the word "elder" is synonymous with "bishop", "overseer", and "shepherd". Each of these words is descriptive of the functions of the Elder.

Jesus Christ is the head of the body which is the family of God. Each household that is a part of the family has at least one Elder that functions as the head of the household. Each member of the household should be a bond slave to God, and be busy ministering the gift to one another.

## **Chapter Five: Serving The Gift To One Another**

**We** have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but manifesting (exhibition of) the truth. II Corinthians 4:2 Here, Paul contrasts craftiness and the truth. It is available to exhibit the truth of God by honest handling of the word of God. When we handle the word deceitfully, (for our own purposes) we are walking in craftiness, which is of the devil. As we saw in the case of diakonos, we have to deal with crafty and deceitful translation of the word.

The KJV was translated by the Church of England. The Church of England was controlled by King James. It essentially was the Roman Church with a new pope, the King. Most of the paganistic beliefs that had diluted the truth and power of God in the Roman Church were still in effect. The translators believed the Church of England doctrines to be true. They translated the KJV according to "their" understanding. They were sincerely concerned about doing a good job of translating, but they were in a position of servitude to the king. A simple reading of the translator's dedication to the KJV will reveal the position and purposes of the translators. They were bound to translate according to the doctrines of the king.

Thanks be to God that we can look beyond that to the critical Greek texts to find the true meaning and power of the word of God. Within the state controlled church in England, there were many levels of rulers. Each position carried varying amounts of authority to exercise dominion over the people under their supervision. One only need read history to see the degradation and offenses of this type of system. Jesus said, "Ye shall not be so". Luke 22:26

We must look honestly at the word of God and sift out the organizational craftiness. There is much sifting to be done in the area of our ministry of reconciliation. We have no rulers to exercise dominion over us. We lead one another by example, in the power of God, through Christ in us. My observation of your operation of the gift makes it easier for me to operate the gift in me. My operation builds your believing in the same way. If I rule over you, I suppress your believing in the gift and build your believing in me and my organization. Jesus said, "Ye shall not be so." Luke 22:26

Dominion and ruler-ship have been so ingrained in us that it is difficult to get past it. We automatically think that there must be a hierarchy. But honest

translation of the word of God proves differently. Let's look at some examples of how the word has been deceitfully handled and exhibit the truth:

The word "apostle" is not a translation. It is a transliteration. A transliteration is a transfer of a word from one alphabet to another. "Apostle" is an English alphabet spelling of the Greek word *apostolos*. By transferring the word to English letters, the meaning of the word is obscured. The word *apostolos* means "messenger", or "one sent with a message." Remember our ministry of reconciliation? Our one errand to run for God? Part of that errand is to carry the gospel message.

Jesus while on earth chose his first "messengers". He spent a lot of time training and teaching them the message that they were to carry. He himself was a messenger. Did he rule by force or constraint? In the book of Acts we see the record of the message being taken to the Jews, then the Gentiles. But the first messengers did not exalt themselves and make themselves rulers. They were servants (*diakonos*) that carried the message, and taught others to carry the message to still others. Any one who places themselves in a position of dominion becomes a *psuedoapostolos*. (false messenger)

In each of the 81 times that the Greek word *apostolos* is used, the word "messenger" should be read and understood. This rendering conveys the simplicity and truth of the mystery of the body of Christ.

Again, the word "prophet" is a transliteration of the Greek word *prophetes*. The meaning of the word is "one who speaks forth." In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for prophet means "inspired person." The context of each usage must be read to find out who inspired the speaker, God or the devil. The same is true today. There are many inspired speakers in the world around us. By the manifestation of discerning of Spirits we can know the Spirit or spirit inspiring the speaker. We also can compare what is being spoken to the written word of God to verify the authenticity of the message.

A "prophet" (inspired speaker) is one who speaks forth and "foretells" or "forthtells" by the revelation manifestations, or by the written revelation of the Bible. One who speaks by any other inspiration is a "false prophet", or speaker inspired by Satan. For a proper understanding of the word "prophet", it should be read "inspired speaker" and understood as such.

The word "evangelist" is a transliteration of the Greek word *euggelistes*. This word means a "good message carrier." An evangelist is one who proclaims the

good message. This is part of each born again persons responsibility as a minister of reconciliation. Paul exhorted Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist, (good message carrier) make full proof of thy ministry." (ministry is *diakonia*, the ministry of reconciliation) The word "evangelist" only appears three times in the New Testament and should be read as "proclaimer of the good message.

The word "pastor" is of French origin. It is translated from the Greek word *poimen* which means shepherd. Of the 17 times *poimen* is used, it is translated into English as shepherd 16 times. Why then is it rendered once in French as "pastor?" The Church of England had a ruling position called "pastor." Let's be consistent in our handling of the word. *Poimen* means "shepherd" every time it is used.

Teacher is a good translation of *didaskolos*. It is interesting to note that this word is used 48 times in the gospels and only once is it translated "teacher". Yet in the Acts and Epistles it is translated "teacher" all but once. *Didaskolos* means "one who teaches" in every case.

*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister (serve) the same one to another. I Peter 4:10*

Every born again person has received the gift of holy Spirit. In that one gift is all the power, authority, and enablements that anyone ever receives in this body of flesh. We are to minister (*diakoneo*, serve) that gift to one another.

Some of the ways that the gift is served one to another is listed in Ephesians 4:11: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

With proper translations of the ministries and the word "some" which is not in the Greek removed, Ephesians 4:11, 12 reads as follows: "And he indeed gave messengers, inspired speakers, proclaimers of the gospel, and teaching shepherds, for the equipping of the holy ones, for the work of the ministry, (of reconciliation) for the building up of the body of Christ." Eph. 4:11, 12 These ministries (ways to serve) have been called "gift ministries" but more accurately should be called "ministries of the gift."

To exalt the persons that believe to serve the gift to others is contrary to the word of God and honors the flesh. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man

after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet we know him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things (new) are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." II Corinthians 5:16-17

Each of us who are born again of God's Spirit has the gift of holy Spirit. Our ministry of reconciliation is part of that gift. Let us, by love, serve the gift to one another.



## **Chapter Six: New Testament House Churches**

There is much to be learned from observing the recorded churches in the New Testament. A look at their unity amid great diversity will give us a model to grow toward. A look at their simplicity of structure and freedom in Christ gives us a model uncomplicated by the world. A look at their explosive growth despite agonizing persecution will give us a model to reach forward to.

The household is the basic social unit that God has set in place. It is no accident that in the New Testament the church that moved the gospel across the continent of Europe was made up of diverse household churches.

In the Old Testament, the household was the basic unit of the society. It is the one social institution that has stood throughout history. God gave Eve to Adam and set up the first household, the only social entity that God has initiated. The Jews were of the household of Abraham according to the flesh. The church (*ekklesia*) is the household of God, and Christ Jesus is the head of the family. We are God's "called out" family. Each local assembly (*ekklesia*) of believers is a household in the family of God, with elders. (shepherd)

The New Testament churches flourished as they followed God's established order of households. Since God is the same now as He was then, and we are still in the age of grace, the order has not changed. If we are to experience the power and explosive results of the early church, we must follow God's order and arrangement.

Every church mentioned in the bible is a household church. There were no church buildings built until the late third century when governments began to take control of the church

The Churches at Jerusalem:

It was in Jerusalem that about 3000 people were born again on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:41 tells us that they "continued ... from house to house." Simple arithmetic makes it plain that there were at least fifty to sixty house churches to accommodate that number of people. In Acts 4:4 we see another 5000 "men" saved. The fact that the Word points out that it was 5000 "men", indicates that along with these men came their households. We don't know how many people were part of the growth explosion in the early part of the book of Acts, but we know there were many households. It was in this context

that in Acts 5:42 we are told that "daily ... in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

### The churches at Philippi:

Throughout the New Testament, the churches mentioned are all groups of God's called out people meeting together in households. It is significant to note that the first church in Europe was in the household of a woman named Lidia. In Acts 16:34 it is called "the house of Lidia." If she was not the head of the household it would have been called the house of Lidia's husband's name. Lidia was a single, business woman who was the head of her own household. It is worth taking note that God chose her to provide the home and leadership for the first church in the European continent. We could profit much by reading Galatians 3:28 again and realizing that with God there is neither male nor female in the church of grace.

Soon to follow was the house of the Philippian jailer. (Acts 16:34) By the time the letter to the Philippians was written there were more churches, as can be known from the introduction of the letter. It is addressed to saints, bishops, (plural) and ministers. (plural)

### The Churches at Corinth:

In the area of Corinth there are four churches specifically mentioned. How many more there were we don't know. The Bible only tells us about these four. In Acts 18:1-4 we learn of the church that was in the household of Priscilla and Aquilla. This husband wife team was an important part of the advance of church in three key European cities; Rome, Ephesus, and Corinth. Paul considers them to be *sunergous* or co-workers, trusted and able to live and carry the gospel just as Paul himself.

Also mentioned is the church that met in the house of Gaius, where Paul stayed when he wrote the letter to the Romans. (Romans 16:23) The household of Stephanas is greeted in the first chapter of First Corinthians. It is also mentioned in I Corinthians 16:15,16 as a model church that the believers should pattern themselves after. Paul wrote that the household of Stephanas had "addicted themselves to the ministry." (I Cor. 16:15) What a commentary to their believing. What a pattern for us in this lethargic time. Another church mentioned in Corinth is the household of Chloe, which was embroiled in contention. (I Cor. 1:11)

## The Churches at Ephesus:

When Paul came to Ephesus he found twelve men who were believers. Twelve men equals twelve households. We don't know how many of these households hosted meetings of the church. We do know that Paul stayed in Ephesus for two years and three months and taught the word of God. The Bible tells us that all of Asia heard the gospel during that time. Paul didn't personally speak the word to every person in Asia. Each person that received the gospel and believed knew that part of being a believer was to carry the message they had been called out to carry. God has not changed. It is still our responsibility to carry out the ministry of reconciliation. There must have been many household churches scattered across Asia at the end of that two year period.

## The Churches at Colosse:

The church in the house of Archippus, which Philemon was a member, is mentioned in Philemon chapter two. The book of Colossians speaks of Nymphas and the church in her (1) house.

## The Churches at Rome:

The sixteenth chapter of Romans is rich with information about the nature of the early church. Great unity was intermixed with great diversity. Careful study of this chapter will reveal much for us to strive for in our relationships with one another.

There are five Roman households mentioned in the Bible. The first is Priscilla and Aquilla's house. The second is the household of Aristobulus. Another is the house of Narcissus. The fourth is "Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes and the brethren with them." Fifth, "Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saint which are with them."

In the sixteenth chapter of Romans there are twenty-seven believers named. A close look at the names will reveal much more about the diversity of the church. There are sixteen Greek names, six Roman, four Hebrew and one Persian. Six of the twenty-seven are women. There are great Roman nobility alongside slaves, and freemen. Unity and love among such a diverse group of people is only possible if they are walking according to the Spirit and not the flesh. Below is the list:

Phoebe 16:1,2 Greek, literal: moon god, woman,  
called diakonos, prostatis (minister or elder)

Priscilla 16:3 Roman, literal: little Prisca, woman  
(of the Prisca family, royalty) called sunergous (coworker)

Aquila 16:3 Hebrew, literal: eagle, called sunergous (coworker)

Epaenetus 16:5 Greek, literal: praised

Mary 16:6 Hebrew, literal: bitterness

Andronicus 16:7 Greek, literal: man of victory, called apostolos.

Junia 16:7 Roman, woman, called apostolos

Amplias 16:8 Roman, literal: enlarged

Urbane 16:9 Greek, literal: to enlarge

Stachys 16:9 Greek, literal: head of grain

Apelles 16:10 Roman Form of Apollo

Aristobulus 16:10 Greek, literal: Best counselor

Herodion 16:11 Hebrew, named for Herod

Tryphosa 16:12 Greek, literal: luxurious or feeble, woman

Persis 16:12 Persian, literal: Persian woman

Rufus 16:13 Roman, literal: red

Asyncritus 16:14 Greek, literal: not compared

Phlegon 16:14 Greek, literal: blazing

Hermas 16:14 Greek, literal: messenger (Mercury)

Patrobas 16:14 Greek, literal: father of life

Hermes 16:14 Greek, literal: messenger (Mercury)

Philologus 16:15 Greek, literal: fond of words (talkative)

Julia 16:15 Roman, literal: curly haired, woman of the house of Julius,  
Roman Nobility

Nereus 16:15 Greek literal: wet, or boat

Olympas 16:15 Greek, literal: heavenly (Greek God)

#### Location of other Household Churches:

Athens Acts 17:22

Amphipolis Acts 17:1

Antioch of Pisidia Acts 13:14

Antioch of Syria Acts 13:1

Apollonia Acts 17:1

Asia I Peter 1:1

Laodicea Colossians 4:15

Lystra Acts 14:20

Berea Acts 17:10

Bithynia I Peter 1:1

Caesarea Acts 21:8

Cappadocia I Peter 1:1

Crete Titus 1:5

Derbe Acts 20:4

Galatia Galatians 1:1

Iconium Acts 16:2

Neapolis Acts 16:11

Tarsus Acts 9:11

Thesalonica Acts 17:1

Troas Acts 20:5

There were many churches and individual believers not mentioned in the Bible who stood, lived and died for their believing. Each of those believers was a key to God's plan to proclaim the gospel. Each believer today, as part of God's called out household is key to God's plan to move His word to the people around them.

Let's experience again the power of God in Christ in us. Let us take hold of God's order for the church and make it live. Once again we can really say, "I'm a part of the household of God.)

## **Chapter Seven: House Churches Today**

**A**s we have seen in the previous chapter, God's plan for the church is based upon the household. When we allow ourselves to be manipulated into anything but what the word of God maintains, we can not experience the power of God in our lives. We must move forward to stand on holy ground, rooted and grounded in the truth.

Unity in the church is only possible through the freedom of diversity. We must fellowship on the ground that we are part of the body of Christ. We are brothers and sisters together of our lord Jesus Christ. God is our Father. We are the household of God.

Unity in the body is based on what the word of God says, not on what any denomination or man says. Rules of order, confessions of faith, and denominational bylaws are all man's words. We have to look to God's words if we are to see the church accomplish it's assigned task.

The evidence from the book of Acts and the epistles make it clear that the household of God is to operate today in the same manner that it did in the first century. For the church of today to operate correctly, the following three principles must be observed:

First, the church ekklesia is designed as a household. (family) The structure is very simple, and must stay simple. Each family has a head of household called an elder. Every person in the church is a minister of God, responsible to minister one to another. Each household church is responsible to the head of the body, Christ. No church or person has any power over another church or person. New churches are formed when a household can no longer handle the number of people. God will raise up an elder for a new church when the time is right for the church to divide into two churches.

The second principle that is clear from the word of God is, each church is to be self governing and self supporting. As is seen in the book of Acts, the church is to practice plurality. People's needs are to be met by their brothers and sisters in the household. Needs are not greeds. Ephesians 4:28 tells us that we should labor that we may give.

II Thessalonians 3:10 tells us, "This we command you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." We are to work to have the food, shelter and

clothing we need, and extra to give. The only two groups the church is to support regularly are widows who are "widows indeed" and over sixty years old with no means of support, and elders who labor in the word and teaching. All others are to work to support themselves and contribute to the needs of the household church.

The third requirement if the church is to manifest power is, each member is responsible to minister the gift. Each person is responsible to win others to Christ. (evangelize) Each person is responsible to speak forth the revealed word of God to fellow believers around them as God inspires them. (prophesy) We each must teach and shepherd those we win until they are strong enough to stand and walk on their own. (pastor, teacher) We are all called out and sent to deliver the message of the gospel. We are the ambassadors of Christ. (apostles)

God has given us the gift of holy Spirit. That gift has nine manifestations which are our God given abilities to carry out the ministry of reconciliation.

We are God's called out church, a counter culture unlike the world has seen since the first century. We have the opportunity to experience God's power and love in our lives if we are willing to believe.

God promises to the church as a whole are delivered through individuals who choose to believe them, and then operate those received promises in partnership with other likeminded believers. Let us believe and operate.



## **Chapter Eight: Plurality**

**W**e live in the day of grace. It is written in the book of Galatians that we are not under the law. If we are not under the law, then we are simply not under the law. Neither are we under the consequences that result from not following the law. (The curse of the law.)

In the Old Testament, and in the gospel period, the law was in effect. One of the many laws was the law of the tithe. Malachi chapter three, from which many teach that we are to tithe, or suffer the consequences, is addressed to the people of Israel, and they were under the law. We are not.

We have been given God's model for giving and sharing of our prosperity in this age of grace. The example that we are to follow is given in the fourth chapter of the book of Acts.

*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the lord Jesus: And great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. Acts 4:32-35*

Each believer in the church shared with the other believers as needed. Many believers went so far as to sell houses and properties that weren't needed so they could provide money to fill the needs of the people of the church.

God's plan for the needs of His people to be met was and is still very simple and straight forward. Reread Acts 4:32-35 and notice that it was not a complex structure or organization, but it was a simple partnership (koinonia) with each person taking responsibility and reaping benefits.

In the short time that passed between Acts chapter four and Acts chapter six, the church grew from about 120 people to many thousand. As you can imagine, there were problems that had to be overcome to carry out the distribution of the money, food and other items.

In Acts 6:1 we see that some of the widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. We have the record of the way that the problem was solved.

*And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Acts 6:1-4*

Some have taught that this example was not carried on into the later part of the early church, but over twenty years later when the book of II Corinthians was written, Paul said that there was to be an equity by the sharing with each other to fill needs. (II Corinthians 8:12-15) This instruction and example is for the believers of the age of grace, of which we are a part.

In First Corinthians 16:2, Paul instructed, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him."

The word of God further instructs us in II Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: For God loveth a cheerful giver." We should give because we are operating the love of God in the renewed mind in manifestation. God has given us His word and we must choose to believe and give willingly out of love. It is our choice. God will not force us to give. However in II Corinthians 9:6 the revelation to us is, "He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully."

We are given an extremely strong example of giving for the wrong reason in the account of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. They did not give out of love and believing, but to glorify themselves.

From the account in II Corinthians 8:24, we find that giving to supply others' need is a way to show "the proof of your love." The book of James makes a very important point concerning sharing our plurality to fill others' needs:

*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding*

*ye give them not the things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believeth that there is one God; thou doeth well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.*

James 2:15-20

When we as believers know the word of God, we then are responsible to believe and carry out that word. In II Corinthians chapters eight and nine, Paul gives instructions to the scattered churches at Corinth, concerning a special collection to help the starving saints in Jerusalem. He doesn't tell them to talk about it or pray about it, or to wait around. But he encourages them to get on with it.

*Now therefore, perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye be burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack. II Corinthians 8:11-15*

Go back to Acts 4:32-35 and read it again. As you read, notice the following six truths of this revelation:

First, no one felt that their possessions were their own. Everything that we have is because God has blessed us. God has supplied our need so that we can carry out the ministry of reconciliation that He has given us. God supplies us so we can give, not so we can squirrel it away. Look at the following verses:

*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things ... I Timothy 6:9-11*

*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. I Timothy 17-19*

The second truth in Acts chapter four that we should see is that they had all things in "common." "Common" is the Greek word *koina* which means shared or common. Possessions were not held as a high priority, because spiritual things were most important. This word *koina* is the word that *koinonia* comes from, which is translated fellowship and means partnership.

Third, no one in the group at Jerusalem lacked for physical needs because there was an equality in the church.

Forth, those who had more than they needed sold unneeded possessions and "laid them down." They turned loose of their gift and turned it over to the "apostles." (Later gave them over to the seven men who were designated to manage the distribution.) They didn't give with strings attached to the gift.

Fifth, distribution was made. People gave. People distributed. God supplies our needs through people. Distribution is made possible by people who choose to believe what God has plainly told us in His word about sharing our possessions.

Sixth, distribution was made according to the need of each individual. Acts chapter four gives us the basic plan of plurality within the body of Christ. Each individual church is responsible to receive and distribute to the needs of believers within the church.

The church should help all believers within their group as needed until they are able to stand on their own and contribute to the common need. I Timothy chapter five gives us very specific instructions concerning who the church is responsible to support on an ongoing basis:

*3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.*

(honor: *tima* place value on)

(indeed: *ontos* really being)

(widow: *xeras* lacking husband)

4 *But if any widow have children or nephews,*  
(not a widow indeed)  
(nephews: ekgona grandchildren)

*let them learn first to shew piety at home,*  
(piety: eusebeiv respect to parent)

and requite their parents: for this is good and acceptable before God.  
(requite: amoibas repay)

5 *Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate,*  
(desolate: memonomene without support)

*trusteth in God and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.*

6 *But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.*  
(pleasure: spapalosa self pleasure)

7 *And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.*  
(give in charge: paraggelle transmit a message)

8 *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*  
(infidel: apistou unbeliever)

9 *Let not a widow be taken into the number under three-score years old, having been the wife of one man.*  
(taken: katalegestho enrolled)

10 *Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved their afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.*

11 *But the younger widows refuse: for when they*  
(refuse: paraitou decline)

*have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;*  
(wax wanton: katasteniasosi grow lustful)

12 *Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not.*

13 *I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.*

14 *For some have already turned aside after Satan.*

15 *If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed*

(relieve: *eparkeito* help) (charged: *bareistho* burdened)

Widows indeed are women that are over 60 years old and have no means of support. The church is to make arrangements for these women to be taken care of, and the church is to provide for them. Other widows are to marry. They fall into the general guidelines given in Acts chapter four. The church is to help them until they either marry or become able to work to support themselves.

Paul goes into great detail to explain why some elders should be financially supported.

I Timothy 5:17-18:

17 *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*

(honour: *times* money paid) (doctrine: *didaskalia* teaching)

18 *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his reward.*

(labourer: *ergates* worker, figuratively, teacher)

(reward: *misthou* pay for service)

I Corinthians: 9:7-14

7 *Who goes a warfare anytime at his own charge?*

(charge: *opsoniois* pay for service)

*Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock and eateth not the milk of the flock?*

8 *Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also?*

9 *For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care of oxen*

10 *Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth is hope should be partaker of his hope.*

11 *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*

12 *If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless, we have not used this power: but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.*

13 *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait the altar are partakers with the altar?*

14 *Even so hath the lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

This is what the word of God says about plurality. Now we need to believe the word, do the word, and see the wonderful results of God's word in action. The word also tells us the following:

*I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35*

*Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Romans 12:20*

*Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:7-10*

*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Ephesians 4:28

The evidence is clear, we are to give of our plurality based upon the New Testament records. Therefore, "my little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." I John 3:18

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