

**ETERNAL LIFE FELLOWSHIP MINISTRIES
& GLOBAL NETWORK**

**Dr. Michael L. Hargett, Sr. PhD
Apostolic Leader**

© 2018, 2021 ELFM – REVISED JANUARY 2022

**APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY
COURSE 108**

**THE CONCEPT OF APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY
ITS BIBLICAL BASE & HISTORICAL PERSISTENCE**

THINKING “OUTSIDE THE BOX”

**ETERNAL LIFE FELLOWSHIP MINISTRIES
& GLOBAL NETWORK
Apostle Dr. Michael L. Hargett, Sr. PhD
Servant Leader**

Apostolic Thrust

Vision

*Building people and Transforming lives!
(LifeShape Skills)*

Mission

*Deliverance by Evangelism, Discipleship by Education,
Development by Empowerment and Deployment by Enterprising.
(Agile Ministry)*

Ethos

*Whole life = Whole person
(Mind-Body-Soul)*

Assignment

*Worshipping God and Serving people!
(CPR) Consistent-Practical-Realistic
Five Fold Ministry Gifts (Ephesians Chapter 4)
Saints-Work-Edification
Unity-Knowledge-Fullness*

Course Objectives

- **LEARN** – Value of Apostolic authority in the modern era.
- **DISCOVER** – The importance of Apostolic authority in today's church.
- **EXPLORE** – The impact of Apostolic authority in the Millennium Ministry Concept.
- **PLAN** – To engage Apostolic Leadership/Oversight in Millennium Ministry.
- **EXECUTE** – Apostolic authority and oversight throughout ELFM and the world!

Apostolic Governing

The Process

1. Organization: Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; I Tim. 3: 1; Titus 1:5
2. Assembly: Heb. 10:25; I Cor. 11:15
3. Teachings: Acts 20:7; I Cor. 14:15
4. Prayer: Acts 12:5; I Cor. 14:19
5. Worship in Song: Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16
6. Lord's Supper: Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:20
7. Gave on 1st Day: I Cor. 16:1,2; Acts 2:44-45
8. Treasury: Acts 5:1-4
9. The Needy: Acts 4:34-35; 11:29-30; I Cor. 16:1
10. Supported Preaching: II Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15-16
11. Discipline Unruliness: I Cor. 5:1-5

Apostolic Beginnings

PROPOSITION 1: Regarding Apostolic Authority The Apostles were given specific authority to define doctrine and set in order churches. This authority was perpetuated in the inspired writings of the New Testament.

PROPOSITION 2: Regarding Common Sense Hermeneutics Human beings, through the use of a common sense possessed by all, have the ability to read texts and reach common conclusions about meanings. This empirical, logical type of thinking is the basis for all public (as opposed to private and subjective) human understanding.

PROPOSITION 3: Regarding Local Churches (CONGREGATIONALISM) The practices of local churches in New Testament days rested on Apostolic authority and that the ordering of churches was intentionally designed by God to promote uniformity among Christians.

Apostolic Oversight

1. The new testament was intended to give general instructions for Christian belief and practice.
2. All human beings have the capacity to read biblical texts and reach common (rational and public) agreements about meaning.
3. The church (both universal and local) was intentionally set in order to be uniform in practice and teaching through doctrine.
4. The historical unity of Christian movements rests on this mindset not on perfect uniformity of understanding.

Apostolic Oversight

BISHOPS DO NOT REPLACE APOSTLES

- This false concept is based on the doctrine of Cessationism.
- This is the teaching that the Apostle's ministry ceased after the death of the twelve. Bishops therefore replaced the twelve as the leaders of the church.
- There is no substitute for the Apostle's ministry.
- We need Apostles in each generation just like we need evangelists, pastors, and teachers.
- When emerging Apostles do not replace founding Apostles, the church is in trouble.
- This cycle of deterioration has occurred in almost every movement and denomination.
- This is because of a lack of understanding concerning apostolic ministry.

Apostolic Authority

The Three Pathways to Authority

1. Gnosticisms And Continuing Revelation
2. Apostolic Succession And The Centralization of Authority
3. Apostolic Succession And The Centralization of Authority

Apostolic Authority

The Three Pathways to Apostolic Authority

- 1. Gnosticism:** “Derived from the Greek for ‘knowledge,’ . . . the term ‘Gnosticism’ covers a number of religious and quasiphilosophical movements that developed in the religious pluralism of the Hellenistic world and flourished from the second to the fifth centuries A.D. . . . It refers to a ‘revealed knowledge’ available only to those who have received the secret teachings of a heavenly revealer.” All other humans are trapped in ignorance of the true divine world. . . .”

Reference: PHEME PERKINS in EVERETT FERGUSON, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), p. 371.

Apostolic Authority

The Three Pathways to Authority

- 2. Apostolic Succession:** “Doctrine that ministry in the church derives from the apostles in historical continuity. . . . Irenaeus of Lyons drew on the idea of the succession of bishops to formulate an orthodox response to the Gnostic claim of a secret tradition. . . .”

Reference: Everett Ferguson in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, p. 76.

Apostolic Authority

The Three Pathways to Authority

- 3. Apostolicity:** In the first and second centuries the issue of Apostolic authority became the primary test used to determine the “canonicity” of the books of the New Testament. The inclusion of books in canonical listings, and the exclusion of other books, rested largely on their clear identification with an apostle. . . . The general acceptance of the New Testament canon was a final confirmation that Apostolic authority was the “rule” for the churches.

Apostolic Authority

(Early Church)

The Dilemma of Early Christianity

1. How is truth established?
2. How can uniformity be established in the churches?
3. What is the basis of Apostolic authority?

History of Apostolic Authority

New Testament

- **Colossians 2:6-7** “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”
- **1 John 1:5** “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”
- **1 Timothy 6:3** “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.”
- **2 Thessalonians 2:15** “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”

Apostolic Authority

The Apostles Bound God's Will

- **Matthew 16:19** “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
- **Mathew 18:18** “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Apostolic Authority

1. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ.
2. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order.
3. Received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ
4. Confirmed in the word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost,
5. Preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their first fruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and Deacons unto them that should believe.
6. And this they did in no new fashion; for indeed it had been written concerning bishops and deacons from very ancient times; for thus saith the scripture in a certain place, *I will appoint their Bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.*

Reference: First Clement of Rome (1 Clement Chapter 42)

Apostolic Authority

1. Apostolic authority is clearly claimed and taught in the NT as the means of established unity of faith. (Ephesians 4)
2. During the Ante-Nicene (circa 100 AD) period Apostolic authority (codified in the canons) was the rule of the church.
3. In the pre-Reformation period independent, primitivism churches appealed to Apostolic authority.
4. Reformation principles are based on Apostolic authority.
5. The Puritan reformations in England and America were fundamentally a “restoration” movements.
6. The American restoration movement (the Stone/Campbell movement) was contiguous with the mainstream of Christian history—not a novel departure from it.

Apostolic Authority

Reformation Movement

- **Rejection of Superstition.** New English versions of the Bible to contrast the simplicity of the early church with the formalism and complexity of contemporary church life. They rejected anything they perceived as superstitious rather than authentically Christian, including doctrines such as purgatory and transubstantiation and practices such as prayers for the dead. They rejected pilgrimages as a waste of time and a money-making scheme for the priests. Simple rational explanations held greater appeal for them than elements of mystery and symbolism. (Introduction of Science)
- **The Priesthood of All Believers.** The distinction between clergy and laity was crucial in the established churches, with the laity being largely passive. But some rejected this distinction, and their anti-clerical stance found a ready welcome among many who were already critical of a privileged and corrupt clergy. . . . The true church was a congregation of true believers. Although there are instances of groups ordaining their own priests, generally they were committed to the priesthood of all believers, with lay people involved in all aspects of religious life, including preaching, hearing confessions informally, and officiating at the Eucharist.
- **The Sacraments.** Believers stressed a common sense approach to faith and applied this to issues such as communion, where it seemed obvious that the bread remained bread, whatever the metaphysical explanations behind the traditional dogmas. Transubstantiation was regarded as a recent and perverted development contrary to the teachings of the orthodox creeds.

Apostolic Authority

Pre-Reformation Movement

- **Anti-Clericalism.** Some preached a simple message of repentance, individual responsibility and holy living. They criticized the corruption of the clergy and denied that such men should be trusted. Instead they endorsed lay Bible study. The movement was marked by deep love for the Bible and passionate desire to understand and obey it. They were committed to a 'believers' church ecclesiology, where the local congregation ordered its life together, and they were determined to submit to biblical authority alone.
- **Church Structure.** There was emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, men and women. The role of the preachers was crucial for the movement, but these leaders were not ordained, nor generally regarded as belonging to a separate class of Christians, nor ranked in any kind of hierarchy. . . . Those who were not preachers remained in their homes and jobs, devoting time to Bible study and nurturing their faith in secret. They collected support for the preachers, ran training schools in their homes and, where they could, tried to draw others into the movement.

Apostolic Commission

The Apostles were commissioned by Jesus to complete the work of revealing God's plan.

- **JOHN 14:25-26** “These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”
- **ACTS 1:1-2** “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen. . . .”

Apostolic Commission

Apostolic Commissioning

- **Act 1:13-26** “And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. . . . *Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*”

Apostolic Definition

- ἀπόστολος
- apostolos
- *ap-os'-tol-os*
 - A *delegate*; specifically an *ambassador* of the Gospel; officially a *commissioner* of Christ (“apostle”), (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, one that is sent.

Apostolic Credentials

The Importance of Paul's Apostolic Credentials

- 1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?
- 2 Corinthians 12:11-12 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the Apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

Apostolic Revelation

Apostolic Role In Revelation & Understanding

- **Ephesians 3:2-6** “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel...”

Apostolic Revelation

Apostles are to Reveal

- **2 Peter 3:1-4** “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation”

Apostolic Doctrine

The Apostles Establish Doctrine

- **Acts 2:40-42** “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Apostolic Foundation

Apostles are The Foundation of The Church

- **Ephesians 2:19-22** “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are bundled together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

A photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a facade of white concrete and large windows. The building is viewed from a low angle, looking up. The image is partially obscured by a semi-transparent white overlay that contains the text.

Apostolic Order

Apostles Establishing New Churches

- **1 Corinthians 7:17** “But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all churches.”

THE “ORDERING” OF NEW CHURCHES
THE “ESTABLISHING” OF NEW CHURCHES
THE “GOVERNANCE:” OF ALL CHURCHES

Apostolic Ordering Definition

Definition of “Ordering”

- διατάσσω
- diatassō
- *dee-at-as'-so*
- To arrange thoroughly, that is, (specifically) institute, prescribe, etc.: - appoint, command, give, (set in) order, ordain.

Apostolic Ordering of Churches

Apostles Ordering of the Churches

- 1 Corinthians 11:16 “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the churches of god.”
- This excludes all other practices

Apostolic Succession

Apostolic succession is the method whereby the ministry of the Christian Church is held to be derived from the apostles by a continuous succession, which has usually been associated with a claim that the succession is through a series of lineage which can be traced back to the original Apostles.

Eternal Life Fellowship holds that the importance of apostolic succession via Episcopal laying on of hands as outlined in the New Testament, which, indicates a clear apostolic succession (from Paul to Timothy and Titus, for example). We therefore uphold and believe in necessity of the apostolic succession of Apostles within this fellowship.



Apostolic Succession

- After the death of the early Apostles the church began to teach that the bishops (those ordained and set by the Apostles) replaced the Apostles as the governmental leaders of the church.
- The doctrine of apostolic succession was espoused by Clement of Rome. He intervened on the behalf of the presbyters of Corinth who were dismissed from the church.
- He ordered their reinstatement by insisting that an orderly succession of bishops was established by the Apostles. This is found in the letter of the Roman Church to the Corinthians (c.a. 96)
- During the second century the church came under threat from false teachings, primarily the teachings of Gnosticism.
- These heresies posed such a threat to the church that Irenaeus proposed the concept that the true churches must be able to trace their leaders back to the Apostles.
- He taught that an unbroken succession of bishops of dioceses founded by the Apostles guarantees the truth that a church possesses.
- In this way one could differentiate true churches from the false ones lead by heretics. This is found in his writing *Against the Heresies* (c.a.185). Churches were therefore considered apostolic if they could trace their leadership back to the Apostles.

QUESTIONS



Mobile Connect with us!

www.lovingarmsworldmin.org

24 Hour Phone Line
262-278-0342

Email
mlhargett@lovingarmsworldmin.org



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