



Where Are the Men?

And is that the Best Question?

Part 2 Types of Leadership

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About this we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you have become dull in understanding. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 5: 11-14 NRSV

Furthermore, he gave some people as emissaries, some as prophets some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers. Their task is to equip God's people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah, until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah's perfection.

We will then no longer be infants tossed about by the waves and blown along by every wind of teaching, at the mercy of people clever in devising ways to deceive. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in every respect grow up into him who is the head, the Messiah. Under his control, the whole body is being fitted and held together by the support of every joint, with each part working to fulfill its function; this is how the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4: 11-16 CJB

TYPES OF LEADERSHIP: FORMAL vs. INFORMAL

In an established church hierarchy the local communities will generally follow the lead of the larger body. **Formal leadership** roles (positions with titles) will be defined and often enforced by that larger body. The inclusion of both men and women in leadership roles varies in these settings though by far the most common practice has been to exclude women from church leadership roles other than in specific women's ministries.

However, formal leadership is not the only kind! **Informal leaders** may not have designated positions within the body yet they exercise influence and leadership in other ways. The quality of this kind of leadership can work both to the good and to the detriment of the body, just as is true of the quality of the formal leaders.

The movie, My Big Fat Greek Wedding, included reference to an old “proverb” or folklore common to European and Middle Eastern culture. “The man may be the head of the house but the woman is the neck, and she can turn the head any way she wants.” Seems as good a description of informal leadership as I could imagine. Though humorous, it conveys some truth. It also seems, to me anyway, to carry a “bite” of sarcasm and sour consolation of sorts that a woman may have more power personally than she can in public, which she can wield to her own satisfaction. This seems to fit in with the subtle battles for control that often hinder and detract from marital happiness.

Though it is common, I do not believe it should be mistaken for normal or inevitable. I certainly do not see subtle attempts at manipulation or control to be appropriate or YHWH pleasing whether it is within a marriage or in other circumstances such as within leadership of a group.

HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

The growth of the house church movement and Messianic Home Fellowships has brought the question of leadership to a personal focus for many, usually by virtue of difficulties and estrangements leading to break-offs and fragmentations that I think are akin to the development of so many different denominations in the past.

Some have reasoned that the splitting of a group is to be seen as YHWH’s determination to take the message to greater numbers of people by having two organizations where there was originally only one. We take exception to that idea and note that there is a very different connotation to a “falling out” that is unresolved and a “sending out” that is designed to be expansion. In the “falling out” kind of division, we see the seeds of destruction embedded right in the heart of any newly attempted gathering. Those who have not learned to work together in mutual submission to our Messiah do not generally demonstrate the humility, character and maturity that would be conducive to being good seed. This is not to say that those left behind by those who “fall out” are going to experience spiritual difficulties though of course, the heart attitudes of all involved are fully known to Him!

One of the benefits of a larger institutional church is a more established hierarchy and (at least sometimes) greater accountability. Usually, there are guidelines and pre-requisites established for anyone to step into leadership. Unfortunately, as is so often the case, form and structure may come at the expense of the freedom and Spirit that comes from personal heartfelt faith and prayerful obedience to Him. It can also lead to the dilemma of needing someone to fulfill a role and being less than selective about the qualifications of the one to do so.

(To be thorough, this is another topic entirely and is an ongoing project to develop more fully

for Set Apart Ministries. One part of that is our series of 3 teachings: *Maturity in Prayer Life*,

Drama Triangle for Messianic Fellowships and *The Importance of Echad in Community* which move through the steps from personal maturity to relational maturity and then put all in context of the spiritual realities in which we live in the final PowerPoint presentation.)

Home fellowship groups may develop around an individual or a small group of people who have a vision. Sometimes Messianic congregations have been sponsored and supported by an existing church such as the Missionary Alliance, but generally the Messianic movement has been a “from the ground up” occurrence. There is no external or authoritative body to appeal to for order such as in Judaism or the traditional church, though there may be a vying and jostling going on between several groups to take on that role. Such a group, in its beginnings, can be very appealing and exciting for those who really enjoy the freedom of initiating.

Unfortunately, that very freedom that was so invigorating to begin with can also carry the seeds of destruction. A group that has such leadership is especially vulnerable to all the personal issues of the people involved. I have seen several situations in which a married couple had the vision and drew in others. The woman will often become the one who carries the responsibilities for arrangements for the group. Though the husband and other men may retain the **formal** leadership role and actions, the wife and other women in the group may tend to interact more frequently, be in mutual prayer more frequently, or simply be more involved in the daily matters of life and thus develop their **informal** authority more strongly than the formal line develops. This can be good if all are respectful and centered firmly in Messiah but oh, so difficult if it becomes a subtle struggle for power and control in the assembly. More than one man has told me that women are better organizers anyway, so he’d rather just let them do the work. This, too, we see as a maturity issue; an issue of being able to “do hard things.”

A group may also form with a determination that there be no set structure but that all be in the Body of Messiah equally. This could be called a completely **informal** leadership concept. This method, though perhaps well intended, does not generally prove to be workable in the long run. The idealism of such a structure-less body all too soon fades under the stress and strain of different expectations. It also does not seem to allow for the fact that those involved are at different levels of emotional and spiritual maturity.

These different levels do have an effect on their ability to follow the Spirit’s leading. Being able to discern the source of internal leadings is not generally a feature of one at infant, child or even young adult levels of maturity! We need to be aware of the weaknesses and leanings of our own carnal, un-submitted flesh as well as the subtle schemes of the adversary, the evil one, and the not so subtle snares of the world. Thus, the warnings offered in Scripture not to put an immature Believer in a position of leadership. The potential for distortion and personal pride to enter in is great. This is difficult enough in a family setting but the potential damage is multiplied when it happens in an assembly. How the enemy of our souls loves to see this destruction!

Next Time: Polarization of Male/Female Leadership Roles has Caused Harm to the Body of Messiah