

What Does It Mean To Be Part Of Master Builders?

Practical Steps to Entering Master Builders



This is a follow-up for those who have read our vision, purposes and goals. We deem this as very important information. The following are practical things you need to consider before making the decision to fully participate in Master Builders.

Chapter 1 — What is Apostolic Oversight?

It will be easier to see what apostolic oversight is by first stating what it is not. In 1st Thessalonians 2:1 the apostle Paul said, “OUR COMING TO YOU WAS NOT IN VAIN”. The word “vain” expresses the hollowness of anything, Paul was saying their work was not void of content or power. This word could also be translated “empty-handed”. Paul was saying “We didn’t come to take something away from you but to bring you something”. This is the heart of apostolic oversight. It has nothing to do with what the apostle “receives” from the church, it has everything to do with what apostolic oversight brings to the church.

Apostolic oversight:

— Is not a means for personal kingdom building. The issue is not quantity— “How many churches do you have in your network?” The issue is the quality of care for the local church and love for the saints.

— Is not primarily about money, it is not “a pretext for greed” (1Thess.2:5). Paul denies that he ever used his ministry as a secret means of enriching himself. Apostolic oversight is not multi-level marketing for church planters where all resources work their way to the top.

— Is not about human glory — “I’m Apostle so and so”. Paul said, “WE HAVE NEVER SOUGHT HONOR FROM MEN, FROM YOU OR FROM ANYBODY ELSE” (1Thess.2:6a Moffat). Paul here is repudiating personal ambition. Paul never used his preaching to gain the honor, recognition and approval that men give.

— Is not being in “authority” over a church. Paul actually did have authority but he never abused it. “Even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority” (1Thess.2:6b N.A.S.B.) The only authority that exists in the church is “Christ’s authority”. True apostles are not authoritarian or controlling. Authority is always to be used for the benefit of those under it never for the personal benefit of those exercising it.

True apostolic oversight has to do with being a “father” to the church. Seeing the church as a father sees his children, intent on training his children according to their individual needs. Caring for children is tiring work. Paul said, “You remember brethren, our labor and toil, laboring day and night” (1 Thess.2:9). True apostles faithfully proclaim “The Gospel of God” without alteration or substitution.

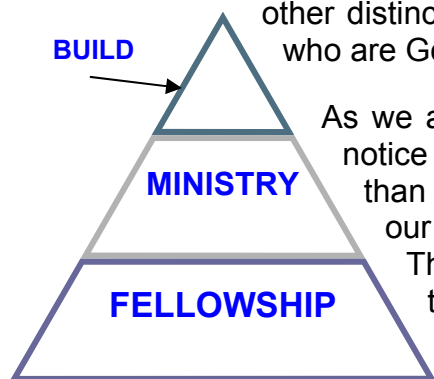
Apostolic oversight is foundational. Paul said “I have laid a foundation and another builds on it” (1 Cor.3:10). The foundation of a building is out of sight but it is the key to stability and the growth of the structure built on it. Many churches today have faulty foundations and as a result

they continually struggle with the same problems. Jesus Christ himself” is the Chief Cornerstone” (Eph.2:20). Everything the church is and does has to be rightly related to Christ, because the church belongs to Him.

Chapter 2 — How We Build

In the Master Builders’ “*Vision, Purpose, and Goals*” booklet there is a triangle on page sixteen that illustrates our purpose as a fellowship of New Testament churches. It is to build with other leaders and churches in Master Builders. We want each local church to reach maximum health and the kingdom of God to be advanced in all the earth. It is in understanding what is meant by the word build that we can better grasp the vision and goals of Master Builders.

The purpose of this triangle is to illustrate the *three levels of relationship* we can experience with others in the body of Christ. The first word in the lower part of the triangle, **fellowship**, is placed at the widest point because it describes the inclusiveness with which we should embrace all those who belong to the Lord Jesus. Whatever our background theologically or other distinctives we may hold, we must be able to fellowship with all those who are God’s children through faith in Jesus Christ.



As we ascend the triangle we come to the second word, **ministry**. We notice that this word is placed at a point on the triangle that is narrower than that of fellowship. While we must be willing to fellowship with all, our choice of those we minister with is somewhat more restricted. The exclusiveness that characterizes ministry with others is due to the fact that we may not be able to minister with everyone else in the body of Christ. There may be differences of doctrine or interpretation of scripture that make it uncomfortable or even impossible.

The third word, **Build**, is placed at the narrowest point of the triangle, signifying that while we must be willing to fellowship with all who know Him, and minister with those God joins us to at various times, the number of those we can build with is significantly smaller. Why? Because building requires a level of relationship with others beyond what we usually experience in fellowship or sharing of ministry. A good example of that is found in II Timothy 3:10 where Paul tells Timothy: “You however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured”. While Paul fellowshiped with many believers and shared ministry with others like Apollos, he built only with those he was in a trust relationship with like Timothy.

Simply stated, building requires that we really know those with whom we labor, a requirement not necessary on a fellowship or ministry level. In times of crisis and disagreement we need proven relationships with people with whom we share a common vision, purpose and goals as well as a commitment to work together to reach those goals. Building essentially requires a deeper level of relationship and commitment to others, as well as a sharing together in the purpose of God. When we build with others we are not just joined to them because of personal affection or admiration of their gift. We share with them a passion to see God’s will and purpose accomplished. Having this commitment, because we know and trust the co-laborer, can pre-solve many a problem down the road.

From the divine standpoint building is God's desire for both leaders and churches in the body of Christ. Both need the kind of knowledgeable trust relationships with each other that provide both accountability and assistance in pursuing God's goal for the local church and the Kingdom. Unfortunately, many leaders and churches today know little of the reality of building with others. Wherever we look today we can find leaders that are essentially "going it alone", having few if any they can share their lives with and partner in the purpose of God.

From the beginning, Master Builders was established as a fellowship of five-fold leaders and churches committed to building together. The great need of the Kingdom is for leaders and churches to realize that they need more than a place of fellowship or a venue for sharing and participating in ministry. What is needed is for churches and leaders to be built together with the true five-fold ministry in the purpose of God. Ephesians makes it clear that the five-fold ministries' only purpose is to equip and mature the church. It is God's only stated tool for this purpose. The proper use of it and the recognition and acceptance of it by churches is paramount.

As a fellowship of five-fold ministers and churches, Master Builders began as a group of churches having fellowship at conferences, as well as churches fellowshipping and getting to know various members of the apostolic team. That has spawned a sharing of ministry—apostolic team members ministering in churches, as well as cross-pollinating of ministries between churches. Both of these continue to the present hour. We believe Master Builders will always be a network of churches which provides a place where people can enjoy rich fellowship, as well as involvement in ministry while we pursue those relationships that will allow building.

In recent years as relationships have grown and ministry opportunities have increased, leaders and churches have begun to build together. This is where the real strength of an apostolic network is experienced for both individuals and churches.

The two most significant areas of building are:

1. the relationship between the apostolic five-fold team and churches, and;
2. the relationship between churches in regions.

Without a doubt the most important aspect of building is between church leadership, church membership and members of the apostolic team of Master Builders. It is part of New Testament Christianity that churches are to be build up, equipped and matured through ongoing relationship with five-fold ministry. While in the first century this was done primarily through relationship with apostles who initially founded the churches, today many churches are discovering the importance of relating to apostles who may not have pioneered the church, yet provide a rich source of wisdom and strength through ongoing relationship. This is accomplished when a church moves beyond merely having fellowship and receiving ministry from apostles, into the place of identifying, recognizing and receiving oversight from an apostolic team. This can only occur where a relationship of trust has been established between a church and members of an apostolic team. Such a relationship takes time to establish.

In Master Builders, we have also seen the importance of recognizing and developing five-fold ministry teams in regions. It is for this reason we hold regional conferences and encourage church leaders in each region to meet regularly. Churches, as well as leaders, need the strength that comes from being built together.

Chapter 3 — The Benefits of Apostolic Covering

There is no reason for a church to have an apostolic covering if the church doesn't benefit from the relationship. If the only one receiving benefits is the apostle, something is wrong. Following are some areas that a church and its leaders should benefit from apostolic covering:

Counsel—

In vision, helping to define it, refine it and articulate it.

In doctrine, to help deal with doctrinal issues confronting a church or causing division in the church.

In church discipline, this is especially helpful in difficult cases to avoid personal attacks against leadership when a member needs discipline.

Protection—

This is to provide an atmosphere of safety and security for both the pastor and the people.

- To protect the people— if a leader falls into error or sin or becomes dictatorial, the congregation knows they have someone to appeal to, helping to avoid a church split.
- To protect the pastor— the pastor cannot be arbitrarily removed without the involvement of apostolic oversight. This protects against false accusations.

Accountability—

Having apostolic covering gives the pastor someone to be accountable to, someone to talk to, relate to and just sound off to.

Confirmation—

Apostolic covering can be used to confirm and ordain elders and other 5-fold gifts in the church. Having someone else to interview and confirm candidates for ministry can provide an objective view that is often missing in independent churches.

Encouragement—

Visits by apostolic covering can bring encouragement and blessing to a local church.

Chapter 4 — Commitment

Apostolic covering doesn't work unless there is a level of commitment by a pastor and congregation. Every pastor knows the value and importance of commitment in the local church. A level of commitment is needed if you're going to entrust someone with ministry responsibility in the local church. As an apostolic network we have come to realize that there are three basic commitments a pastor and local church need to make to fully benefit from apostolic oversight.

First, attend the National Conference — This is the only national meeting Master Builders holds. Everything else is done on the regional and local level. The National Conference provides an opportunity:

1. To increase vision
2. To build relationships
3. To encourage fellowship
4. To receive teaching and ministry
5. To connect with a global vision
6. To be personally strengthened and refreshed

Second, attend the Regional Conferences — Twice a year the Master Builders apostolic team conduct regional meetings based on a certain theme that will help build local churches. Pastors in a region are encouraged to meet together monthly for fellowship, prayer and encouragement.

Third, participate financially — One of the signs that a church is committed to Master Builders is regular financial support. As an apostolic team we set no minimum amount that a church must give to join or participate in Master Builders but every church should give something.

Jesus taught that one of the evidences that people were receiving the Word of God was their willingness to support the messengers financially (Matthew 10:5-14). We have been very cautious as an apostolic team regarding the subject of finances. We know there is much confusion and abuse in this area in the body of Christ. Paul's concern was that he would not be a burden to the churches (2 Cor.12:14). When Paul accepted offerings people said it proved he was only in it for the money. When Paul refused offerings people said it was because of how proud he was. There are no salaries paid to the apostolic team but we do have a reimbursement policy that covers legitimate travel expenses incurred by the apostolic team. We believe "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Tim.5:18) and that churches receiving ministry from the apostolic team should financially support the ministry. Some churches also contribute individual support to team members who are not receiving a salary from a local church.

As a National movement that is committed to reaching the nations there are many things that need to be done that will require financial support.

- We need to develop materials that are translated into different languages to minister to the nations.
- We need to develop materials that can be used by Master Builders churches for the discipling and training of people in the local church.
- We need to provide for the national office to cover administrative expenses including office expenses, printing costs, mailing costs, web site maintenance, and hosting the national conference.
- We have developed a "go fund" which is money set aside from the monthly giving of the churches, to assist in the planting of new churches.

Our desire as a national movement is to be a resource center that will be able to provide support for local churches both here and abroad. All of this requires finances.

Entering Master Builders

The relationship triangle provides some practical insight into how a church can enter Master Builders. Any church wishing to be part of Masterbuilders must necessarily pass through the three stages of fellowship, ministry and building. On the *fellowship* level a church and its leaders should begin to build a relationship with members of the Master Builders Apostolic Team. Since everything in the kingdom of God is based on relationship this critical phase cannot be ignored. It is as we fellowship with others that we begin to know their hearts and understand their vision. Therefore it is critical that leaders of churches interested in being part of Master Builders begin by fellowshipping with Master Builders team members. This also should include leaders taking time to fellowship with other leaders of churches in the region. This can be done during a region's monthly gathering as well as the quarterly regional conferences.

As a church and its leaders has fellowship with team members and churches in the region they should enter the ministry phase by inviting Master Builders team member(s) to come to the church and share with the church. This allows the church to personally see the heart of the team, as well as receive vision regarding being an apostolic church. This time of ministry from a team member(s) should include a time of sharing with the church leadership if possible. Another important aspect of this phase is for the pastor and other church leaders to attend the Master Builders' National Leader's Conference and receive ministry from other team members and church leaders in Master Builders.

As a church and its leaders has fellowship with team members and other church leaders within the network and begins to receive ministry from them as well, it should then begin to build a relationship with certain team members with a view to asking them to serve as the primary apostolic oversight in the church. This does not mean that a church is limited in receiving ministry from only these team members. Any gift within Master Builders is available to minister to a church at any time. But building requires that a church identify those team members which provide oversight for the church. This should be a minimum of two team members, since a church needs to be served by an apostolic team and not just an individual. We feel it is very important to publicly acknowledge who the apostolic oversight is to the local church. This will help the congregation to understand the value and purpose of having true apostolic oversight.

Practical Steps

1. Begin to build relationships with members of the Master Builders team.
2. Talk to your leaders and the church about having apostolic oversight.
3. Have someone from the team teach on being an apostolic church.
4. Start attending regional meetings, plan to be at the National Conference.
5. Pray and ask God who is to be the primary apostolic oversight. We recommend that at least two team members be publicly recognized by the church as your apostolic oversight (you are not limited to two).

Hard copies of our "Vision, Purpose and Goals" booklet can be requested through the following contact points.

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