

Characteristics of A Work of God

1. Insignificant beginnings. *Acts 1:12-15*

Jesus had ascended into heaven. Now what? The Christian community numbered only around 120 people. The external environment was filled with danger.

There was the power of Rome and the hostility of Jewish leaders. The disciples were vulnerable and weak. And Jesus told them to go to all nations! *Matthew 28:18-20*

Jesus had taught that the kingdom of heaven (every work of God is an expression of the kingdom of heaven) is like a grain of mustard seed. *Matthew 13:31-32*

A mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds. But it grows. It becomes larger than all the garden plants. The birds of the air come and make their homes in its branches.

2. Where there is life, there is growth. *Acts 2:42-47*

The fellowship of disciples was huddled together in an upper room. Then, after a short ten days, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came.

Unbelievable! A transformed Peter called the Jewish crowd to repent and be baptized. About 3,000 people responded. More were added to their number daily.

Ultimately the power of the Gospel of Christ permeated and transformed Roman society. Christianity would ultimately be declared the official religion of the Empire.

3. Testings. *Acts 4:1-3*

Powers of darkness will oppose any work of God. Especially in its fragile beginnings, they will seek to snuff out the new life that is beginning to grow.

It is important to view testings and counter-attacks as predictable. We are not confused or discouraged by them. We move to counter them—with God's resources.

Choosing faithfulness to God's call in spite of hardship brings us to experience the cross. We stand with the Savior, prepared to suffer that his kingdom might expand.

In the process, we find more of God's blessing flowing to us. Entering more fully into the death of our "old self," we discover our "new self" in Christ maturing within.

4. Prayer. *Acts 1:14*

Our most foundational response to attacks of the enemy is prayer. Note the practice of the early church: Acts 2:42; 3:1; 4:31; 6:3-4; 9:10-11; 10:1-2; 12:5; etc.

We learn to pray, not just after an attack, but before one happens. We establish a protective prayer covering over the work and everyone in it. We enlist intercessors.

5. **Humility.** *1 Corinthians 4:9-16*

This is a foundational passage for understanding some basic components of the calling and ministry of apostolic leaders. Their God-given mission is costly.

Blessing and fruitfulness from God does not lead to personal aggrandizement and glory. It leads us rather into our own experience of the sufferings of Christ.

Pioneering a work of God calls for apostolic calling and gifting. Apostolic leaders are spiritual fathers and mothers. They learn to lead as those who are “last of all.”

Humility is living in light of what is true about God and me. I am not God. I am a glorious being created in God’s likeness. I am also a broken being needing a Savior.

Lack of Christlikeness in leaders leads to chaos, hurt, defeat. Christlikeness in leaders will be imparted to other team members who make up the ministry.

6. **Faith.** *Hebrews 11:8-10*

Scripture tells us that Abraham is the father in faith for us all. *Romans 4:16* It is instructive to notice the rhythm in Abraham’s faith experience:

Called. Faith is not something I use to try to get God to do what I want him to do. I don’t initiate; God does. Faith is my response to God’s call—his initiative—in my life.

Failure. We seldom get it right the first time. Abraham didn’t. He had struggles and failures. Consider his process in the matter of the birth of Isaac. *Genesis 15-21*

Obedied. The settled response of faith is obedience. Faith is not just cognitive. It is a decision of the heart, expressed in action harmonious with what is believed.

Did not know. When Abraham first set out from his home, he did not know where he was going. But he knew the One who was with him. That was enough.

City with foundations. How faith unfolds: God speaks. I struggle. I choose to obey. I don’t know specifics. But I know the One who is with me. God fulfills his promises.

7. **Passion to honor God alone.** *1 Samuel 2:30*

One of the most proven paths to blessing in a work of God is to ask in every decision, “What choices will bring the greatest honor to God?”

We heard the Lord say to Antioch Network: Do nothing motivated to grow Antioch Network. I will extend the work in my way and time. You grow the kingdom.

Our role is to take the work deeper into God. God's role is to develop the work—in his ways and timing, according to his pleasure and will.

8. **Laying foundations.** *1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Ephesians 2:20*

Every work of God has identical foundations: Christ, the apostles and prophets, and the Scriptures. But every work also has its own unique foundations built upon them.

Foundations for each ministry are laid by apostolic leaders—those called and gifted by God to initiate, lay foundations, build a team/fellowship, and order the giftings.

9. **Setting the gifts in order.** *1 Corinthians 12:28-31*

Laying foundations requires ordering the gifts in the body. Apostolic leaders oversee this. It is crucial to understand how calling, gifting and character interact.

Gifting. We invite individuals into a range of ministry opportunities. We notice where they are most fruitful and joyful. This is a good indication of how they are gifted.

There are natural gifts and spiritual gifts. These tend to be compatible. One gifted spiritually to teach will probably have natural ability to teach. Both are gifts of God.

But caution! Although gifting is often the most visible factor in the body, it is also the most vulnerable spiritually. Far more important than gifting is character.

Calling. How someone is gifted by God points to how that person is called by God. God gives us gifts to enable us to do what he is calling us to do.

Character. Crucial in ordering the gifts is character—the foundation on which every gift must rest. When character is inadequately formed, gifting will often implode.

Gifting produces effects, such as the praise of man. Christlike character enables us to navigate these effects well. Character is the first line of protection in God's work.

Godly order requires gifting to be subservient to character. As appropriate, leaders call on individuals to set aside gifting for a season to allow Christlikeness to mature.

To order the body around gifting rather than character will result in disorder. God's work is never hindered by mistakes; God's work is hindered by sin.

10. **The need for protection.** *1 Peter 5:8-11*

In a work of God we must always be alert for spiritual attack. God has provided a wide range of armor to enable us to withstand. *Ephesians 6:10-18*

A group of spiritual fathers and mothers providing prayer, oversight and counsel to leadership can be vital. In abundance of counselors there is safety. *Proverbs 11:14*

Self-will in each of us must be submitted to others in love. Decisions emerge from oneness of heart. Until unity is reached, the choice is easy—just wait. *James 4:7*

Look for the Spirit to form an organizational structure something like: apostolically gifted leader(s) protected by an oversight group of spiritual fathers and mothers.

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