

Chapter Eleven

WHO IS FIT TO LEAD?

PLURALITY

Therefore, a plurality of leaders does not necessitate an absolute equality in every function. In even the godliest group of leaders, some will naturally be more influential than others. Some will have teaching gifts that outshine the rest. Others will be more gifted as administrators. Each can fulfill a different role, and there is no need to try to enforce absolute equality of function.

The Twelve, for example, are always listed in similar order in Scripture ([Matthew 10:2-4](#); [Mark 3:16-19](#); [Luke 6:14-16](#); [Acts 1:13](#)).

[Matthew 10:2-4 \(NASB\)](#)

²“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.”

[Mark 3:16-19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter),

¹⁷ and James, the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder");

¹⁸ and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot;

¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.”

[Luke 6:14-16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴“Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;

¹⁵ and Matthew and Thomas; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;

¹⁶ Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

[Acts 1:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³“When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon *the Zealot*, and Judas *the son* of James.”

They seem to divide naturally into four groups. The first four names listed are always Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Peter’s name always heads the list, and the other three are listed in varying order. Those four dominate the gospel narratives, and three of them are often seen with Christ apart from the other nine ([Matthew 17:1](#); [Mark 5:37](#); [Mark 13:3](#); [Mark 14:33](#)).

Matthew 17:1 (NASB)

¹“Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and *led them up on a high mountain by themselves.”

Mark 5:37 (NASB)

³⁷“And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James.”

Mark 13:3 (NASB)

³“As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately.”

Mark 14:33 (NASB)

³³“And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.”

The second group includes Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew. Philip’s name always heads that list, but the other three are ordered differently in different places. The third group consists of James, Thaddaeus (or Lebbaeus, also known as Judas, son of James), Simon, and Judas Iscariot. James’s name always heads that list.

So, each group seems to have had its unofficial leader. Peter was usually the leader and spokesman for all twelve. Their office and their privileges were equal, but their influence and importance varied according to their gifts and personalities.

Nothing suggests that Peter had a higher office than the others. He certainly is never portrayed as a pope in the Bible. In [Acts 15:13](#), for example, it was James (“**the Lord’s brother**,” according to [Galatians 1:19](#), not one of the Twelve) who announced the Jerusalem Council’s decision, even though Peter was present and testified.

Acts 15:13 (NASB)

¹³“After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, “Brethren, listen to me.”

Galatians 1:19 (NASB)

¹⁹“But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.”

And in Antioch, the apostle Paul withstood Peter “**to his face, because he was to be blamed**” when he compromised with the Judaizers ([Galatians 2:11](#)).

Galatians 2:11 (NASB)

¹¹“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.”

Peter clearly wielded no more authority and held no higher office than the other twelve, although he plainly was the strongest leader in the group. As noted, Peter and John together dominate the early chapters of Acts. But Peter was always the spokesman and preacher. John, of course, had equal authority, and (partly because he lived longer) he wrote more of the New Testament than Peter, including the gospel that bears his name, three epistles, and Revelation. But when John and Peter were together, Peter always did the speaking. Likewise, although

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Dr. Eddie Idefonso

Lecture # 70



Barnabas obviously had remarkable teaching gifts, Paul was always the dominant member of that duo.