

Ephesians 4 Ministries

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Apostles

Jesus the apostle: "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." (Mk 1:38)

Jesus commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19)

Apostles are the boots of the church, keeping us moving, going to new places, preventing the church becoming a tree!

Prophets

Jesus the prophet: "For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." (John 12:49-50)

Jesus commanded us to listen to Him: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

Prophets are the head-phones of the church, helping us hear and follow Jesus.

Evangelists

Jesus the Evangelist: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:10).

Jesus commands that we go and heal the sick: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."

Evangelists are the stethoscope of the church, helping us listen to people's diseased souls so we can prescribe Jesus, the cure.

Pastors

Jesus the pastor: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ... As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." (Jn 15:5-9)

Jesus told Peter to "Feed my lambs ... Take care of my sheep."

Pastors are the food-bucket of the church. They attract us to the good pasture of the Word of God and His healing presence, saying, "Come on! Here is food for your soul."

Teachers

Jesus the teacher: "When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. (Jn 6:5-6)

Jesus commands us to apprentice disciples: "teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matt 28:20)

Teachers are the aprons of the church, they say, "come on, I'll show you how to do it..."

The Head

Jesus gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to the church, but which of these is the leader?

That is the same as saying "Jesus gives boots, ear-phones, stethoscope, food-bucket and aprons to the church. Which of these is the leader?"

That is a stupid question. They are all gifts to help the church "build itself up in love, as each part does its work". If you give someone a gift to help them, the gift does not take control! The head is always the leader. The body's proper functioning is the point. The gifts are simply aids for the body.

... we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

The Foundation

Earlier in Ephesians (2:20) Paul says that the Church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets". Proponents of "Apostolic" ministry have taken this to argue that local churches must be established by apostolic and prophetic ministry and should continue to have apostolic and prophetic oversite. But this is nothing to do with what Paul is saying. We must read this in its context:

Eph 2:14-22 For he himself ... has made the two groups (Jews and Gentiles) one and has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility ... His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, ... and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, ... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people ... **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone...

Eph 3:4-6 You will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which ... has now been revealed by the Spirit **to God's holy apostles and prophets**. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body...

The prophets Paul refers to are the New Testament prophets that understood the significance of the Old Testament prophets who prophesied that Abraham's blessing would be taken to the Gentiles. The apostles are Peter and James and Paul and those other early apostles who established from God that there was to be no divide between Jewish and Gentile believers. Gentile inclusion into the People of God is the foundation that has been laid and never needs to be re-laid.

Valuing the Ministry-Gifts

Leaders should be able to identify at least some of these gifts within themselves and those in the leadership team. It is probably unhelpful to label one another in this way, but recognising and promoting and valuing these gifts is really important.

- Which of these gifts do you recognise in your team?
- Which are less well represented?
- Is your team lop-sided or well balanced?
- How can you strengthen the weaker areas?
- Do you need to bring other people into the team?