

GOD

God Gave Ministers to the Church (Ephesians 4 verses 11 and 12)

God takes care of us. He wants us, both individually as His children and collectively as members of His household, to walk with Him and to enjoy the benefits of the more than abundant life. In order for us to be able to do this, God by His grace gave us gifts, both to us as individuals and to the Church of Grace to which you and I belong.

We can find great truths about these gifts and how they benefit us in the Book of Ephesians. We'll read the record in Chapter 4, beginning in verse 7, and then we'll focus on God's gifts to the Church.

Ephesians

4:7 But unto every (*each*) one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Verse 7 says that each one of us, each member of the Body of Christ, was given grace, God's unmerited divine favor, and we were given this grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. The gift of Christ is the gift of holy spirit (Christ in you) that we each received when we confessed Jesus as Lord and believed that God raised him from the dead.

All gifts of God are by His grace, so they can all be referred to as *charismata*, gifts of grace, vertically from God to man. In verse 7, the Greek word used for "gift" in the phrase "the gift of Christ" is *dōrea*, which can be understood as a gift from God which benefits the individual person who received it. So, the gift of holy spirit that we received by God's grace provides great benefits to us individually. And, as the verse says, this "was given to each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ". What this means is that each one of us got the same measure, the same amount, of this gift. Romans 12:3 states that "God has dealt to every (*each*) man the measure of faith".

But by God's great grace He not only gave us each individually a gift, but He gave gifts to the Church, to strengthen, protect, and add to the Body of Christ. Look at verse 8:

4:8 Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

This verse is a fulfillment of Psalm 68:18:

Psalms

68:18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell *among them*.

68:19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us *with benefits, even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

The word “Wherefore” (“Wherefore he saith...”) in Ephesians 4:8 refers back to the previous verse. Because we were given grace, when he (Jesus Christ) ascended, he led captivity captive and gifts were given. These gifts, even though they are also *charismata*, gifts of God’s grace, are not the same as “the gift of Christ”, that gift of holy spirit that we each received when we got born again. The word “gifts” in verse 8 is from the Greek word *doma*, which refers to a gift that benefits others on a horizontal level. The word “men” in this verse doesn’t refer to individual believers each receiving a gift, but it refers to the Church, collectively the Body of Christ. So, the gifts referred to in verse 8 are gifts of God’s grace that are given to the Church, providing benefits to the Body as a whole. It would be great to know what these gifts and their benefits to us, members of the Church, are.

Before these gifts are enumerated, however, there is a parenthesis, a figure of speech that expands on what was said before. This parenthesis includes the next two verses:

- 4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?
4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill (*fulfill*) all things).

This parenthesis refers to the one who ascended up on high and led captivity captive, Jesus Christ. Verse 9 starts off with the statement of fact that he ascended. The next few words, “what is it but that” would better be read: “what does this fact imply, except that...”

The rest of the verse, “he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth” contains a figure of speech, called the genitive of apposition. The word “of” can be better understood as “that is to say”, rendering this “...he also descended into the lower parts, that is to say, the earth”. In other words, Jesus Christ who in Luke Chapter 1 verse 7 is referred to as “the dayspring from on high” was here on earth, in these “lower parts” below heaven.

Verse 10 then tells us that this same Jesus who was here on earth carrying out his earthly ministry is the one that “ascended above all heavens” so all things can be fulfilled, including making available these gifts to the Church.

Now that it’s understood who it was who fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 68:18 to make these gifts available, verse 11 lists these gifts.

As we read verse 11, we will remove the commas. All punctuation was added during translation, and in this case the commas make the verse wrongly imply that some individuals received one gift while others received other gifts. So, we’ll read this verse without the commas:

- 4:11 And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.

The five things listed here: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are people with ministries that God by His grace made available to benefit the Church.

In the Estrangelo script for the Aramaic New Testament, the word “some” also appears before the word “teachers” and the verse more accurately reads “and he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors; and some teachers.”

In this verse we find two figures of speech: polysyndeton (“many ands”) and the repetition of the word “some”. Both emphasize the importance of each one of these ministries, and the word “some” implies that each ministry can be represented by more than one individual.

We know from verse 8 that these ministers (people with ministries – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) are *doma*, gifts of God’s grace given to the Church: the ministries themselves are not gifts given to individuals for their own benefit. It’s significant that in this Grace Administration to which we belong there are five gift ministries; five is the number for grace, and we know from verses 7 and 8 that these gifts were made available because of God’s grace.

Before we consider what each of these ministers does, let’s read the next few verses to learn more about their purpose and also how long they will be available as gifts to the Church. We’ll start with verse 12:

4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

This verse begins with the word “For”, which in the Greek is the word *pros*, meaning “for the purpose of”. The five ministries serve a purpose, which is “the perfecting of the saints”, the born-again believers in God’s household.

This word “perfecting” is from the Greek word *katartizō*, which means “to set in order”, “to restore”, “to mend”. It is used in the Gospels in the sense of mending nets used in fishing. We are already perfect spiritually, so this “perfecting” or “mending” refers to the purpose of these ministries in helping us to perfect our walk in the renewed mind.

People with these ministries, which have the purpose of helping us to perfect our walk, help us to achieve goals. These are indicated by the two other usages of the word “for” in verse 12, which are both translated from the Greek word *eis*, meaning “with a view to” or “with the goal of reaching or obtaining”.

We could read this verse: “For the purpose of the perfecting (mending) of the saints, with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ”. The word “ministry” in this verse refers to ways of serving on a horizontal level, with the ultimate goal being the edifying, or building up, of the Body of Christ, the Church.

Then, verse 13 tells us how long people with these ministries will be available to serve their purpose to the Body of Christ:

4:13 Till (*Until*) we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

People will have these ministries available until the Return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That is when we all, including everyone who is yet to become born again, will come to the unity of the family faith. The Greek word for “knowledge” in this verse, *epignōsis*, implies full, or perfect, knowledge through acquaintance with. We will have this full knowledge of the Son of God when we become acquainted with him at his Return. Then, the Body of Christ will have grown to a perfect (mature, complete, full-grown) “man”, figuratively speaking. The phrase “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” refers to the fact that at that time, when Christ returns and all of us are gathered together, the Body of Christ will be full, complete. Only then will these ministries no longer be necessary. Until then, they will continue to serve their intended purpose, the perfecting of the saints, helping us to realize the goal that is stated in verse 14:

4:14 That we henceforth be no more (*no longer*) children, tossed to and fro (*or, literally: “surging about like waves”*), and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness: whereby they lie in wait to deceive (*the Greek text reads: “lie in wait with a view to the systematizing of error”*).

Now that we know the purpose of these ministries and how long they’ll be available to the Church, we’ll take a look at what people with these ministries do. Let’s return to verse 11:

4:11 And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors; and some teachers;

An Apostle is one who brings new light to their generation. This “new light” may be old revelation but it is new to the generation to whom that person speaks. The word “apostle” is from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means “one who is sent” or “an ambassador”.

We’ve all heard of “the twelve apostles” of the Gospels. Eleven of these men, with the addition of Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26), were the first apostles in the Church of Grace that began on the Day of Pentecost. Examples of other believers who served as apostles in the First Century Church include Barnabas and Paul (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7), James the half-brother of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:19), and Sylvanus and Timothy (I Thessalonians 1:1 with 2:6).

A Prophet is one who speaks for God to God’s people, those within the Body of believers. A prophet may speak by forth-telling (saying what God wants said for the present moment, often to bring people back to the Word) or fore-telling (such as warning the believers of some future event to prepare for). Examples of prophets in the First Century Church include Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10), and Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32). Also, Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen were listed as “prophets and teachers” in Acts 13:1.

According to Bullinger’s *Lexicon*, an Evangelist is “a messenger of glad tidings, one who proclaims the facts of redemption”. In our present administration, an evangelist is one who wins the lost, the unsaved, to Christ by teaching them the new birth and seeing them born again. Evangelists in the First Century Church include Philip (Acts 21:8), Timothy (II Timothy 4:5), and the Apostle Paul (“preacher” in II Timothy 1:11 is the word in the Greek).

A Pastor is one who cares for the individual needs within the Church. The Greek word *poimēn* is translated “pastor” only in the list of these ministers in Ephesians 4:11. Everywhere else this word is translated “shepherd”, one who tends to the “flock” (in our administration figurative for the members of the Body of Christ). This person isn’t just one who feeds, but is one who tends to, guides, nourishes, and cherishes.

Even though no specific person is mentioned as an example of a pastor (shepherd) in the First Century Church, you can work the Word to find examples set by people who served in this capacity.

A Teacher is one who expounds on the accuracy of God’s Word. The Apostle Paul was a teacher (II Timothy 1:11). Acts 13:1 refers to “certain prophets and teachers”.

We know people with these five ministries are available to us in the Church to which we belong today, but were any of these ministries in operation before the Age of Grace? If so, which ones? By reading about how these ministries were operated in Old Testament times, we may gain more insight into their functions so we can better apply them in our day and time.

Review of the Old Testament reveals that only three of the ministries listed were in operation before the ministry of Jesus Christ: there were prophets, pastors (shepherds), and teachers. Because the focus was on the Israelites alone, there was no need for evangelists to “bring new people into the fold”. Because the Word of God had come down to the Israelites through the prophets, there was no need for apostles to “bring new light”.

The first person to be called a prophet in the Old Testament was Abraham (Genesis 20:7). Later, Moses set the standard of comparison for all future prophets:

Deuteronomy

18:15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet (*referring to Jesus Christ*) from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me (*Moses*): unto him ye shall hearken:

Also, we know from Matthew 11:9 and 13 that John the Baptist was a prophet.

Even though there are no specific individuals directly named as pastors (shepherds) serving the Israelites of Old Testament times, we can see their influence, and references to shepherds can be found in places like Ezekiel, chapter 34.

We can see that teachers were serving during Old Testament times from records like Leviticus 10:11 (referring to the duty of Levites to teach), II Chronicles 15:3 (referring to teaching priests), and Ezra 7:10:

Ezra

7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

A teacher needs to prepare their heart to seek and to do God's Word before they can effectively teach God's Word to those who need to hear.

We can find several records showing ministries in operation, but was there one man who operated all five of the ministries mentioned in Ephesians with such precision and faithfulness that we can study his example to really appreciate how they are to most effectively operate? As it turns out, there is, and that one man was Jesus Christ.

Even though his ministries were directed specifically to Israel, the people to whom he was sent to minister, Jesus Christ operated all five by the grace of God. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said "...on this rock (*petra*, a massive, solid foundation, referring to Jesus himself) I will build my church". This church, referred to as "the Bride of Christ", is not the same as the Church of the Body to which we belong in this Age of Grace, but rather was built from among the Israelites. To do this himself, Jesus needed to operate all of the ministries that were available, and we can definitely learn from his example.

Jesus Christ was an apostle. Hebrews 3:1 says: "...consider the apostle and high priest of our profession (*confession*), Christ Jesus". The practical opening of his ministry as an apostle is recorded in Luke Chapter 4 where he read from the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath day.

Jesus Christ was a prophet. Moses foretold of the prophet who would be like him (Deuteronomy 18:15). Luke 24:19 refers to Jesus as "a prophet mighty in deed and word".

Jesus Christ was an evangelist, calling out the lost sheep of Israel and gathering a following to build his church. Even though the word "evangelist" is not used directly referring to Jesus Christ, its verb form, *evangelizomai*, is. In Luke 20:1 it says: "...he (Jesus Christ) taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel (*evangelizomai*)..."

Jesus Christ was a pastor, or shepherd. In John 10:11 and 14, he twice refers to himself as "the good shepherd", establishing this fact.

Finally, Jesus Christ was a master teacher. We can read many records in the Gospels of his teaching. John 3:2 says "...we know that thou art a teacher come from God..."

So, we not only have records showing these five ministries in operation in the First Century Church, but we can also learn much about how these ministries should be operated by studying the great example set by Jesus Christ.

Remember, these ministries are not gifts given to individuals for their own benefit, but the people operating these ministries, listed in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11, are gifts given by God's grace to benefit the Body of believers, the Church. A person may have a long suit, a God-given ability, to serve the members of the Church as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher, but it's only when there is a need for that ministry and that person chooses to serve in that capacity that the ministry will be a *doma*, a gift serving others on a horizontal level.

Where properly utilized, operation of these ministries enables believers to walk with the power of God while adding new members to the Body and keeping standing ones in fellowship.

From all this, it's obvious that not every member of the Body of Christ operates one or more of these ministries, but that doesn't make a person without a ministry any less important than someone who operates one or more. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Each one of us has a function in the Body and ways in which we can serve. Also, every member of the Body of Christ has the ministry of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:18).

We'll conclude in I Corinthians Chapter 12:

I Corinthians

12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular,

12:28 And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (*a listing of some representative examples of ways to serve*).

12:29 Are all apostles? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? (*different people have different functions in the Body*)

12:30 Have all the gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (*different people have different long suits and serve in different ways in the Church*)

12:31 But covet (*earnestly desire*) the best gifts (*depends on what way of serving is needed*): and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

This section is followed by Chapter 13, which expands on the Love of God. No matter how we serve in the Body, whether it is by the operation of a ministry or in any other way, it will only be the most profitable and have the best benefit possible when we serve as we renew our minds and manifest the love of God.

We have seen that because of God's grace we have been given gifts, both individually in the form of the gift of holy spirit and collectively in the form of people who operate one or more of five ministries. When people with these ministries operate them with the love of God, their ministries provide great benefits to the Body of Christ, helping us to walk with our heavenly Father as we enjoy the blessings of being a part of God's family.

- Dr. Rick Batt

Examples of people who operated ministries in the Church of Grace:

- Apostles: 11 original apostles plus Matthias (Acts 1:26)
Barnabas and Paul (Acts 14:14)
Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7)
James (half-brother to Jesus Christ) (Galatians 1:19)
Sylvanus and Timothy (I Thessalonians 1:1 with 2:6)
- Prophets: Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10)
Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32)
Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen (“prophets and teachers” Acts 13:1)
- Evangelists: Philip (Acts 21:8)
Timothy (II Timothy 4:5)
Paul (“preacher” in II Timothy 1:11)
- Pastors: none specifically mentioned, but can find examples of service
- Teachers: Paul (II Timothy 1:11)
Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen (“prophets and teachers” Acts 13:1)

Examples of people who operated ministries in Old Testament Times:

- Prophets: Abraham (Genesis 20:7)
Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15)
John the Baptist (Matthew 11:9, 11:13)
- Pastors: none specifically mentioned, but references include Ezekiel 34
- Teachers: references in Leviticus 10:11; II Chronicles 15:3; Ezra 7:10

Ministries operated by Jesus Christ:

- Apostle: Hebrews 3:1 (the apostle and high priest of our profession)
Luke 4: practical opening of ministry of apostle
- Prophet: Deuteronomy 18:15 (a prophet like unto Moses)
Luke 24:19 (a prophet mighty in deed and word)
- Evangelist: Luke 20:1 (preached the gospel – *evangelizomai*)
- Pastor: John 10:11 and 14 (the good shepherd)
- Teacher: John 3:2 (a teacher come from God)