



12 Ephesians 4:7-17. Who Are the Ministers in the Church?

⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

⁸ Therefore it says,

*"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men."*

⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Last week he talked about unity, and now we're going to talk about how God uses our differences and diversity of gifting to bring together that unity. Starting in verse 7 we see that grace is given to each of us. In this context it means power from God to do whatever it is that God desires for us to do. This particular passage is going to talk about some that are gifted for the very purpose of having "offices" (special designated positions) in the Body of Christ. What am I talking about? I'm saying that some are called to actually be the teacher or pastor of the Church. The same person can do both, but some often have greater strengths in one area or another. Some have an unusual gift to share the gospel in such a way that people just want to receive Jesus. This passage isn't really dealing with gifts of the Holy Spirit that we see for example in 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Let me parenthetically say, that finding one's gift seems to be a topic that we're all really interested in. Sandy and I took some tests along the way to try to determine our spiritual gifting and I'm not sure what we really learned through all of that. We sort of figured out our gifts as we grew in the Lord and served in churches which we were attending along the way. We made ourselves available and God directed us.

So let's set these gifts aside that Paul is talking about here for a minute and talk about the spiritual gifting that each of us has. We are given gifts according to the "measure" that He has given us. That means that God directs gifting as He so desires. So although we're equal in the eyes of God, He doesn't give gifting to all in the same measure.

Difference between natural ability and spiritual gifts?

We know some people have carpentry skills. Some others have mechanical skills. Some have artistic skills. These are things we're born with. Spiritual gifts are abilities empowered by the Holy Spirit. You are given these gifts. They are abilities to do what you otherwise couldn't do.

For example, someone like Larry Waddell might have a natural ability to play music, but may also have a spiritual gift of evangelism and he may be able to use those gifts to win others to Christ. In the same way Larry Lengyel might have mechanical or electrical abilities. He might work shoulder to shoulder with some in this group while his gift of pastoring kicks in and he mentors men. So how do we discover our spiritual gifts? Here are five ways to discover your gift in the Lord:

- 1 **Keep growing in Christ** and keep learning more of His Word. This enables God to push you.
- 2 **Pray and ask God to reveal** to you what gifting you have. And while you're waiting, just serve the Lord wherever you're needed. **GO DO SOMETHING.** I had an old boss named Sal Frusco, and I went to work for Sal selling new homes on a subdivision. He used to leave the project in his big maroon Cadillac that had a Landau white top and he would say in his thick New Jersey Italian accent, "Hey, du sumptin...even if it's wrong". I'm not really advocating that anyone go out and do something wrong, but you often get it right by just doing something that is needed. I don't know who did it, but there were three bags of trash outside of the door on Sunday afternoon. Someone saw that they needed to be taken to a dumpster and they went. That is doing what you see needs to be done.

- 3 **Take notice of the things you're passionate about.** Is it kids? Do you have a passion to pray? Do you have a passion to cook food for others? Do you have a passion to encourage others through cards, calls, and letters? Just do things that you're passionate about. If you not passionate about anything, ask the Lord to change your heart to be able to see needs in the Body.

- 4 **Be patient.** Sometimes you'll be aware of things but the doors will be closed until the appointed time. It seemed like when I was in my mid twenties, God spoke into my heart that I was somehow going to pastor others. I felt so strongly about it that in my first trip to Ireland when we were going through the town of Mullingar we stopped at a shop that sold items made of pewter. They had door knockers, bread plates and all sorts of other things, but I felt like buying a Communion set: A chalice for holding the wine, and a little plate for holding the bread. I just bought it. I just had a sense inside of me that somehow I would have the heart of a pastor, but I just didn't have it at that moment.

I often hear other people say things like "I knew God had a call on my life but I was terrified of stepping through that door and surrendering my life to Him." I was always terrified of NOT DOING what God wanted me to do. I just had a little trouble figuring out along the way what I was supposed to do.

In the meantime, I just tried to build my company, build myself as a person, remain faithful to my wife, and be involved in the spiritual and emotional rearing of my children. What I'm saying, is most of finding God's will is just doing today what needs to be done while you are "pray-walking" as Larry Lengyel calls it. Stop trying to push doors open. Be patient in God's timing.

Paul in verse 9 then quotes Psalm 68 which is one of David's victory songs over the Jebusites. Paul is just using it relating to Jesus who was a victor over sin and death, and he's just talking about Jesus coming down from heaven and going back to heaven.

In verses 9-10 Paul is not saying that Christ descended into hell. When I was a kid I would hear that in the Apostles Creed. Jesus didn't go to hell. When Jesus died He said it is finished. Paul is just saying that Jesus became a man and came to the earth. When He went back to heaven, He gave ministry gifts to believers. When it says that He went into the lower parts of the earth, that's where we are. He came down from heaven and came into the lower parts of the earth. He then ascended back up into heaven.

Verse 11. List

apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherds, and the teachers

Verse 12 "To equip the saints for the building up"

These are leadership gifts to build up the church. So let's look at what these mean.

Apostle – one sent forth with authority. Some people say this still exists. I do not think apostles exist as they did in the New Testament church. One of the markers of an Apostle is that they saw Jesus in person (other than Paul). I don't really know anyone who has physically seen Jesus and physically walked with Him.

Prophets – one who speaks a message for the Lord

I don't think these two function like they did in the time of the First Century. They were used in a special way during the founding of the church.

Earlier in Ephesians chapter 2 Paul says, "The household of God (the Church) is built on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets".... He doesn't say it was built on pastors and teachers. Having said all of this, let me say that people are still "sent out" and sometimes a prophetic word is said by one believer over another. Have you ever been urged to go say something to someone like "God loves you" still exists.
"speak forth"

Evangelists – it's easy to think of people like Billy Graham who was burdened and gifted. Those people it is so easy for them. I think of my friend Chad McMillan. He can just share Jesus like he's just breathing. We are all told to "be prepared" to evangelize, but some are truly evangelists.

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (1 Peter 3:15 ESV)

We are all called to share Christ, but only some are gifted to pray with the person to receive Christ. One man plants and one man waters, but it is God who gives the increase. (1 Corinthians 3:7)

Shepherds – this is referring to what we call "pastors". The word used here in the Greek is poeima...literally means a "shepherd". We can imagine much better what a shepherd is than a pastor. He feeds the sheep and looks after them. (Nurturing and correcting)

Teachers – dividing the word of God with truth

Why are you the church given these giftings?

SO YOU CAN BE BUILT UP.

To call me a minister is to categorize me to do the work of the ministry. It is YOUR JOB TO DO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

Visits, prays over people, counsels people, prays before the meal etc.

MY CALLING IS TO EQUIP YOU TO DO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

Each of you in this room is to do the work of the ministry. You are to be visiting the sick. You should be praying for others in trouble. You should be doing ALL THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

You should be loving and helping each other and doing everything that it takes to be loving each other.

Verse 13 tells why you are called to do the ministry.

SO THAT WE CAN ALL ATTAIN THE UNITY OF THE FAITH....THAT WE'LL GROW UP TO THE FULL STATURE OF JESUS

AND NOT BE BLOWN AWAY BY EVERY DOCTRINE.

¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

A HEALTHY CHURCH BODY BUILDS ITSELF UP

MY JOB IS TO EQUIP THE BODY OF CHRIST TO DO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

THAT WILL BUILD THE CHURCH UP TO BE SOLID. GOD'S PURPOSE IS FOR THE CHURCH TO BUILD ITSELF IN LOVE.