

The Gifts For Unity

Ephesians 4:7-11

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As we begin Ephesians 4, just a quick reminder we begin the walk section of Ephesians. Ephesians 1-3 are the wealth of the believer; Ephesians 4-6 are the walk of the believer, some take this section on warfare in Ephesians 6, and we have the wealth, walk, and the warfare of the believer. Basically, there are two sections. The first section is doctrinal, and the second is practical. The first one is principles and the other one is practice.

I want to give a little review by way of just outlining where we've come in Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 4:1 we are called to "...walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Basically, this is the section of the walk of the believer. In the first way in which we are to walk is that we're to walk in unity. I pointed out last week that the word "worthy" means to weigh the same as. It's the image of a scale where Jesus is on one side and we're on the other, and we're to weigh the same as Jesus. We're to bring our practice up to our position that we have that's in Christ Jesus.

Peek real quickly at verses 14-15. Paul says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love," notice the statement, "may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." He wants us to be speaking the truth so that we may grow up in Him. He doesn't want us to be children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (we're going to look at that in depth next Wednesday night), but he wants us to walk worthy of our calling.

In verses 1-16 we are to walk in unity, and we saw, verses 2-3, the graces we needed for unity. We saw that we are to have "lowliness," humility, "and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." In verses 4-6 we saw the ground or the foundation for our unity, that "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

When we start tonight in verse 7, we actually discover that we have gifts needed for unity, and then we're going to see next week, verses 12-16, the growth into unity. We see the graces needed for unity, verses 2-3; we see the ground or foundation for our unity, things that all Christians share together equally, verses 4-6; tonight we have the gifts that are needed for unity in the body of Christ, verses 7-11; and then the growth or the maturity into that unity, verses 12-16.

I want you to note the contrast beginning there in verse 7. Paul says, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." That "but" is an intended contrast. It's called the disjunctive conjunction. It's tied together but breaks apart because it's going a different direction in contrast to what we all share, verse 6, together as one body in Christ to

what we have individually and distinctly different but what is to bring unity in the body. In the body of Christ there is unity but there is also diversity, and these are not contradictory. There's unity and diversity. God has made each one of us unique. God has given us different gifts that we use in love for the building up of the body and the glory of God. He says in verse 8, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." We're going to stop right there.

We have gifts given to us that are needed for the growth and the unity of the body. There are different gifts given to different individuals, but we're to use them for the building up of the body. Paul has spoken of what we all have in common, as I pointed out in verses 4-6, now he points out that within that unity there is diversity, going back to verse 7. That's why he starts with this "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

Verse 7 is only one verse, but I want you to take note that it's packed with information about the gifts of the Spirit. Tonight I'm going to give you a list of the most main verses that deal with the gifts of the Spirit so you can do your own research to learn about and study them. Some day we'll do a series on the Holy Spirit, and we'll do just the gifts of the Spirit in that series as well. The point we want to see in verse 7 is that every Christian is given a grace gift. Notice it, "But unto every one," every believer, every child of God, "is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." That word "grace" and that word "gift" come from that same root word in the Greek. It's the Greek word *charis* which means grace gift or grace endowment. When the Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved," by *charis*, by God's gift, God's grace gift, you have been saved.

Charis is used for the gifts of the Spirit and basically means a gift, but it means a grace endowment. Grace and gift are tied together. All the gifts that God gives us, and this is so, so every important, come to us based on the grace of God. We don't earn them, deserve them, or merit them. God doesn't say, "That guy is really smart. I'm going to give him a gift," or "That guy is really awesome. I'm going to give him a gift," or "That guy is really talented. I'm going to give him a gift." God gives gifts based on His grace, and we're going to see that He does it by the work of His sovereign Spirit, choosing as He will, who He gives what gifts to. If God hasn't given you the gift that you think you should have, you can't gripe, complain, or bemoan God. It's all God's grace. Just be glad He's given you a gift. Amen? It might not be a gift that puts you in a prominent place where other people see you and you're recognized in the body of Christ, but the Bible is very, very clear that all the gifts are equally important, necessary, and of great value. The Bible even says those gifts which are less comely, or less recognized, are very important.

Do you know there are organs in your body that you never see? Believe me, they're important. They're vitally important. They don't get as much recognition as your face, your hair, or physique, but those organs are very important. There are no vestigial organs in the body of

Christ. Every one of us, the minute you are born of the Spirit of God, God endows you with this grace gift. Write it down. Every Christian is given a charis, a grace gift.

Write down 1 Corinthians 12:7 where it says this, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," or for the common good. I'm going to give you these key verses for the gifts of the Spirit, but all of them have a common theme. That common theme is love, unity, the body of Christ, and the glory of God. When you read all these sections in the New Testament that deal with the gifts of the Spirit, there are these themes that run through it. Running through it is unity, the body, the mention of the body, the church; the mention of love, building up the body; and the mention of the glory of God. Gifts of the Spirit are not jewelry for you to show off at church. The gifts of the Spirit are tools for you to build up the body of Christ for the glory of God. Too many times churches are showing off, "Look at my gift of the Spirit." They're only focusing on the supernatural gifts, but in reality they are all supernatural. If God gives you the gift of hospitality, that's a supernatural gift. If God gives you the gift of showing mercy (which, by the way, those are both gifts of the Spirit), that's a gift of God's grace. It's a supernatural spiritual endowment by God's grace.

Write down 1 Peter 4:10. It says, "As every man hath received the gift," so again, each one of us, and then here it says, "even so minister the same one to another," that's that unity-body concept, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Every Christian has at least one gift.

Let me fire some of these thoughts and points. Write down, verse 7, that every Christian has been given a gift, and every Christian has been given at least one gift. Now, I don't believe that any one individual is given all the gifts of the Spirit. It's believed by some, I don't think it's accurate, that there are nine gifts of the Spirit. I chuckle because there are actually, I believe, some gifts of the Spirit that maybe aren't even mentioned in the Bible. I think that God is a God of many varieties, much grace endowing people with different gifts and abilities, so I don't think we can limit it to nine gifts. Even, biblically speaking, in the Scriptures there are different references that cause us to come up with different numbers, so to number the gifts and to say, "I have all the gifts," I think is presumptuous, foolish, and unscriptural. I have run into people, "I have all the gifts of the Spirit," and I'm going to point out some verses tonight that show that not all the gifts are given to all believers, but all believers have at least one gift of the Spirit.

Secondly, no Christian has all the gifts. Let me give you that verse, 1 Corinthians 12:14-31. That's a large section, but 1 Corinthians 12, by the way, is one of those classic chapters on the gifts of the Spirit. It mentions the fact that we're the body of Christ, the hand can't say to the eye, 'I don't need you,' so not any one person has all the gifts. He closes the chapter with "Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues?" He says no. It's a rhetorical question expecting an absolute no answer. They are grace gifts.

Go back with me to Ephesians 4:7. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," so it is the grace of God. God didn't give you that gift because you're good looking. God didn't give you that gift because you're highly intelligent. God didn't give you that gift because you're highly gifted, and the gifts of the Spirit are not the same as

natural abilities. You can have a natural ability that you can consecrate to use for God, but the gift of the Spirit is something that is absolutely supernaturally God given. It may come out of your life as though it were a natural ability, but it actually comes from God. God prepares you, God gifts you, God enables you, God opens the door of opportunity, and we faithfully step through that to be used by God.

I think that's one of the goals of the Christian life is to use your gifts for the glory of God. I think to be used of God starts with the work of God in your heart in the area of a desire simply to be used of God. I'm often asked by young men, "How did you get started in pastoral ministry?" I tell them it just was the Lord put on my heart, "I want to be used." I never told the Lord how. I never told Him what I wanted to do. I just said, "Here I am. Use me." Then, when a door opened up to do anything I could do—it wasn't preaching or teaching—I just jumped on it. I want to serve the Lord. I'm glad to serve the Lord, and God opened another door and another door, and another door. He just led me and guided me, but it was all just, "Lord, I just want to serve You," menial tasks or whatever it might be. I never dreamed in a million years that it would be preaching or teaching God's Word, but it all starts with a desire.

Remember the Bible says in Psalms, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." It doesn't mean that you desire something and God gives it to you. It means that God gives you the desire, and then He gives you what you desire. If you're delighting in God, your desires are God given. Many times your gift is the very thing that you desire to do because it's God-given desire, if you're fully focusing on the Lord, making Him your delight, and you're humbly saying, "Lord, I'll go where You want me to go. I'll do what You want me to do. I'll be what You want me to be. I'll serve You, Lord, just open a door," and whenever God gives you an opportunity, you're right there ready to be used by God and to serve the Lord. They are grace gifts.

Write this fourth point down real quick; that is, the gifts are given by the sovereign Spirit. The Holy Spirit is clearly said in 1 Corinthians 12:11 to be the source of these gifts. Christ exalted in our passage, and we're going to get back to this text, came down from Heaven to earth, went back up to Heaven, sent the Holy Spirit and gave gifts to men, and then gave those men to the church. He gave these gifts, in this case these men who were in offices of the church, and then He gave them to the church as gifts, which is an amazing and marvelous truth here.

Write down, 1 Corinthians 12:11, that it's the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. You can pray and you can ask, but God will do what He is going to do. You can't bend the arm of God. These gifts are to be used in love, to build up the church, for the glory of God. I've said this for years, it's nothing new; but I think that this is one of the most profound summaries of the gifts of the Spirit, and I encourage you to write it down. They are to be used in love, 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that. They're to be used for others, not for your self advancement, for the building up of the body of Christ, that's why you have to be connected to a church to exercise your gifts, and then they are to be used for the glory of God. They are to be used in love, to build up the church, for the glory of God. Those are fundamental foundational truths about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We move in verses 8-10 to this fascinating statement Paul makes. He says, "Wherefore," so in light of this, "he saith, When he ascended up on high," I want you to understand that verse 8 is a quotation from the Old Testament book of Psalms, Psalm 68:18. I want you to hold your place here in Ephesians and just flip back to Psalm 68:18 where Paul pulled this reference under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul pulled it from this Psalm. "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." Paul doesn't quote the entire verse but quotes from the first half of this verse.

Go back with me now to Ephesians 4:8. This Psalm is a little bit challenging to kind of understand the historical fulfillment. Some think it was King David and his conquest of other nations, came back in triumph, and gave gifts to the people of God. A better interpretation is that the Psalm in its primary meaning is a reference to God giving gifts and conquering as a warrior. The imagery, the metaphor, whether it be the Psalm or the reference used by Paul in the book of Ephesians, is that of a conquering king conquering the enemy, taking captives. In the Roman world the armies had what was called a triumph (not a motorcycle). This was a military parade where they would conquer an enemy, come back in a parade with their spoils, and dispense the spoils to their people. The metaphor, whether it be the Psalm or the reference of Paul in Ephesians, is that of a conquering warrior coming back in triumph and then giving the blessings of the spoils of battle. It says there that when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.

I want you to note that verses 9-10 is in parenthesis. Sometimes we don't look at that, notice, or see that, and it should be in your Bible. It's parenthetical. That doesn't mean it's not part of inspired Scripture, it is the Scripture, but Paul is actually pausing to go into more detail or depth on the quote he just used from the book of Psalms. In doing that, Paul gives it a Messianic application. Now, I'm not free to take a verse from the Psalms and say, "This is Messianic," but we can have solid reason for doing that if the New Testament clearly says so. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul takes this Psalm and actually says it's Messianic. He was writing, and the Spirit led him, to show that that has an application here to Jesus Christ. He's describing the Lord's ascension then His descension first before He went back and ascended up into Heaven.

Look at verses 9-10. "(Now that he ascended," I'm going to ask you to quote this to me in the foyer after church tonight. This is a tongue twister. "(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" This is also referenced in 1 Peter 3:18-19. Now, I don't want to get bogged down here, but there's two really good, really possible interpretations of what is going on here. I'm going to give you both of them. They are both theologically, biblically doctrinally sound, I believe, and I don't know for sure, I'm not dogmatic about which one is the proper interpretation, but let me give you another principle of interpreting the Bible.

A verse in the Bible has only one meaning, not multiple meanings. It has multiple applications,

but God said what He said, and He meant what He meant. What I mean by that is when you're studying the Bible, interpreting Scripture, you're looking for what we call the authorial intent—what was the original idea or intention of the author, in this case Paul by the Holy Spirit—when he wrote it. Then, when you interpret a passage, you don't want to impose your interpretation on that verse, you want to get to the authorial intent, the original meaning. It's sometimes difficult to do, and this is the case.

Here are the two views. The first view, and I have taught this view from this passage for many years because I believe it's taught elsewhere in Scripture, is that it's describing Christ when He died on the cross and was buried in the grave, that during the three days in which He was in the grave He actually descended, and they use that concept of "...lower parts of the earth," into what is called Hades. You might call it hell, but it had two compartments. It was described in Luke 16 where we have Lazarus on one side in the place of comfort called Abraham's Bosom, also known as paradise, and the other side a place of torment where the rich man was in the flames and asks Father Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue for I'm tormented in these flames. What we believe is that Jesus descended into this compartment, not the place of torment but the place of comfort, Abraham's Bosom, where there are Old Testament saints waiting for the atoning work of Christ on the cross, and that He took them and carried them to Heaven, the Father's house. That's the idea described here, and I pointed out that's a reference to 1 Peter 3:18-19.

Write down also Acts 2:25-35 where it indicates that Christ descended into hell but His soul did not see corruption. That doesn't mean Jesus went to hell and had to be born again. The Word of Faith teachers have this crazy concept of what's called the born-again Jesus—that He died, had to go to hell, had to be born again, conquer the devil, and come out of the grave, and that's why when we're born again we conquer the grave and the devil and we're little gods. It goes off onto all kinds of crazy things. But in tying it in with Luke 16, Lazarus and the rich man, it could be.

A second interpretation, and I have to admit that in the last many, many years as I've studied this passage and read a lot of different commentaries, that I'm leaning more toward the second interpretation—that it's actually just a description of Christ having left Heaven and having come down to earth and then goes back to Heaven. "(Now that he ascended...he also descended first," and it's perfectly possible for even the phrase, "the lower parts of the earth," to be used for leaving Heaven, coming all the way down to earth, and you can study the grammar, the Greek and all that, and good scholars recognize that so both of these views are possible. I lean toward the second view, but I believe that the first view is taught in other places of the Bible.

The question is whether or not that's what Paul's trying to teach here in this passage or that he's just teaching that Christ left Heaven, came down to earth, was crucified, buried, rose from the dead, and He ascended into Heaven. Not only do we have the coming of Christ, we have the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, and then after He ascended, which means He went back to Heaven, He was exalted at the right hand of the Father, which was the place of power and authority. Whichever view you want to take, the main message behind this imagery

is that Jesus is the conqueror, that Jesus came from Heaven and conquered sin, death, the grave and the devil, rose from the dead, ascended back into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

If you want to look at the whole life of Christ, you have to start with the incarnation, then you go to the crucifixion, then the resurrection, the ascension, the exaltation, He's seated at the right hand of God the Father; and then you add the return, He's coming back in power and glory to set up His Kingdom. Amen? That's kind of a summary of Christ. In these verses, Paul is basically saying that Jesus is the conqueror. You can also parallel them with Philippians 2, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," not something to hold onto but emptied Himself, "and took upon him the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...And that every tongue should confess." In the context the idea is now He sent the Spirit.

How do we know that the atoning work of Christ on the cross was accepted by God the Father? The answer is the resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. How do we know that when Jesus rose off Mount Olivet in Acts 2, and the disciples watched Him go up and disappear in the cloud, that He made it to Heaven? How do we know He didn't get detoured somewhere, land in the Bahamas or something? How do we know He got to the right hand of the Father? How do we know that His work on earth was accepted? The answer is the day of Pentecost. Do you know there's a lot more in Acts 2 than people realize. It wasn't just a wind and a fire and people speaking in tongues, it was the birthday of the Church, the body of Christ. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit to regenerate and indwell believers, permanently to seal them with the Holy Spirit, and to give them gifts of the Holy Spirit. You need to understand all the significance of what happened on the birthday of the Church, Acts 2. How do we know that He got safely to Heaven? The Holy Spirit came, and the Holy Spirit gave gifts unto men. That's what Paul is actually saying in this very important verse. It's so important for you to understand.

Now we come to verse 11, our last verse, "And he gave some, apostles." Back to verse 7, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," then he lists those men given to the church in whom He gave gifts, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." What he does here is shifts gears a little bit. He starts in verse 7, "...every one of us is given grace according to the...gift of Christ," but when he comes to verse 11, he actually says that He's given men to the church to be a blessing to build up the church, to equip the church, to unite the church, and to glorify Himself. These men were gifted, but these men are also gifts. These men were gifted, but these men are also gifts given to the church. Gifted men are given to the church, verse 11. Note that, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some...pastors and teachers." Who gave them? Christ did. Again, the Holy Spirit did, but in this case, it's a reference to Jesus. He's the Who in verse 11 who gave these gifted individuals to the church.

There are four groups, and this is one of the reasons why I didn't want to go any further than verse 11 tonight because I wanted to talk about them for just a moment. There are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. Notice there's no "some" before teachers, "...some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers," not some, pastors; some, teachers because "pastors and teachers" are one person. He's not talking about two separate individuals. It should be hyphenated, pastor-teachers.

First of all He gave apostles. Now, if I spend too much time on this and get a little too detailed I could get...I don't think anyone tonight from here will get mad at me, but I could get people mad at me. But, I'm old. I've been around a long time. Why would I worry now about people getting mad at me? I've got nothing to lose, and I have to be obedient to my convictions. What is the primary reference to the apostles here? It's used in the primary sense of individuals chosen by Christ. Let me give you the criteria for apostles. By the way, the term "apostle" means one who is sent out or commissioned on an errand. You had to have seen Christ, 1 Corinthians 9:1-2. Secondly, you had to have witnessed His resurrection, Acts 1:8, 21-23. Thirdly, you had to be directly commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel, Galatians 1:1, Matthew 10:10.

I believe that there are no more apostles in this sense in the church today. This is the point that I said I could make some people mad at me because some churches, some organizations, like to claim, "We have apostles," and they like to claim especially, these are cults that will do this, that they are in direct succession from the first apostles and the hands have been laid on all the way down to the living apostles today. The Mormon church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, claims they have the succession of apostles to this very day. I believe they are wrong. I believe that's unscriptural, that's not what the Bible teaches, and that the apostles and the prophets in the primary sense of an office have passed off from the church. They laid the foundation with the apostolic teaching that we have and the canon of Scripture, and the pastor-teachers and the evangelists build on that foundation. In that restricted sense, you could say I'm a Cessationist because I don't believe that there are apostles in this primary sense today. I'll point out a couple more verses for you to back that up in just a moment. A lot of people like to claim authority as an apostle because they like to say things and bring people under their power that aren't biblical or scriptural, "I'm an apostle. You better listen to me. I speak with apostolic authority," or they have new revelations or new teachings or extra-scriptural biblical things that are unbiblical to try to claim apostolic authority.

Go back with me to Ephesians 2:20 for just a moment. We covered it several weeks ago. Paul is talking about the church, and we're "...fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," which is a reference to the church as a family. It says in verse 20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The key there is to note that it is, verse 20, "...the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

Once you build a foundation for a house, you don't rebuild the foundation, right? Once a house is placed upon a foundation, for you to do a new foundation, you have to tear down the house to

build a new foundation. What you do is build on a foundation, so in that sense, I don't think there are any apostles. If someone in the church today claims to be an apostle, the only possibility for that is in a secondary sense. You say, "Well, what do you mean?" Meaning that you are called to be a missionary, called to go to foreign countries, called to preach the gospel, and that's not a lot different than the evangelist or any believer that is commissioned.

The word "apostle" is connected to the concept of ambassador. To be an ambassador of the United States in a foreign country, you speak with the authority of America. If you are an American ambassador to a foreign country, you speak with all the authority of that country. There are missionaries and there are secondary apostles in the Scriptures (Barnabas was mentioned as an apostle) because they were commissioned or sent out; but they weren't part of the original twelve, and then adding Paul, who was, "...born out of due time," who saw the risen Christ, saw the resurrection, and then were commissioned by Him and could speak and teach with apostolic authority. Acts 2 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." The Scriptures had not been completed yet, but they were listening to the apostles' teaching and were building their lives upon that.

I believe that our focus today in the church is the apostolic doctrine contained in the Word of God. You are on safe ground there. When somebody claims to be an apostle, I'm suspicious that they're trying to usurp authority over someone by claiming apostolic authority. If they say, "Well, I'm only commissioned as an ambassador," we're all ambassadors for Jesus Christ. We're all to be missionaries for Jesus Christ, so I don't believe there are apostles in that sense today in the church.

The second is prophets. I probably spent more time on apostles than I should have. These are the two categories, and again this could upset somebody but I'm going to say it anyway. The tendency in pentecostal or charismatic circles is they love to have apostles and their prophets because their focus is on experience and the Holy Spirit and experiencing His power. It's not enough to just get their doctrine from apostolic truth found in the Scriptures, which is objective truth, they must have a word from the Lord or a vision or a prophecy. They must have a prophet speak, "Thus saith the Lord." Whenever someone says, "Thus saith the Lord," you better open your Bible, search the Scriptures to make sure what they say is from the Lord, aligns with what the Bible says. Here's my theory: If a prophet is saying something from the Lord, it has to be aligned with Scripture; and if it's going to be aligned with Scripture, why do I need his, "Thus saith the Lord"? Why can't I just go right to the Word of the Lord speaking in the Bible? I've got to check it with the Scriptures anyway.

I can't tell you how many times people have come to me because I'm the senior pastor, "I'm a prophet. I have a word for your church. Can I speak to your congregation?" I'm supposed to let you, a stranger, come into this church and speak to this congregation because you claim you're a prophet and anything you say has to be in the Bible, and we have Bibles. I just say, "No, thank you. We're a non-prophet organization." That does not mean, and this is not a series on the gifts of the Spirit, there is not a gift of prophecy, that's different. I think to understand that gift is a challenge because it's mentioned in the Bible but not defined. The

word itself means to speak forth God's Word, to prophesy. It doesn't mean to prophesy events before they happen, it just means to speak forth God's Word. I'm convinced that when preaching and teaching the Bible, that the Holy Spirit can give the preacher or the teacher the gift of prophecy, that he can speak God's Word, in expositionally preaching God's Word, and God can speak right to the heart of God's people directly. But it's all based on Scripture anyway.

It's a very dangerous thing when the church shifts its focus away from apostolic teaching found in the Scriptures, canonized by the church in the Scriptures, and they start shifting to the apostle, the prophet, a word from the Lord. I'm a little suspicious when I hear pastors preaching, "Oh, the Lord gave me a message," or "The Lord gave me a word," or "The Lord gave me something to share with you." You're supposed to just read the text, explain the text, and apply the text. The Lord gave it to everybody. It's right there in the Bible. What do you mean the Lord gave it to you? "Oh," and we close our Bibles and slide forward on our pew, "this is a direct word from God. He's got a hotline to Heaven. He's channeling the Holy Spirit right now." Sometimes it gets real extreme, "God's speaking to me and He's saying this, and He's saying that." The only way we know if it's the Lord is it's gotta be written in His Word. Amen? We have a, "Thus saith the Lord," in the Scriptures, and it's objectively true. It's the same no matter whether I'm happy or sad, no matter the circumstances. I'm not saying that God hasn't given the gift of prophecy, but that's a whole other subject as to how that works in the body of Christ, so let's be careful. Prophets were those who received direct revelations from God in the beginning days of the church before the New Testament was written and formulated.

Thirdly, we have evangelists in verse 11. The term "evangelist" is only three times in the New Testament—it's here in this passage; it's in Acts 21:8, referring to Philip the Evangelist, we read about him in Acts 7 and 8; and also in 2 Timothy 4:5, where Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. He was a pastor telling him to do the work of an evangelist. What's an evangelist? "Evangelist" literally means bearer of good news. There's a sense in which we're all to be evangelists, but God gifts some people with the gift of evangelism. Billy Graham is a classic example of someone who was given the gift of evangelism, and God gave him to the church to build up, edify, and to glorify God, to give him that gift of evangelism, preaching the gospel. Pastors are to do the work of evangelism, 2 Timothy 4:5, but all Christians as well should do the work of evangelism as well.

I should have moved a little faster because I'm going to have to wrap this up. We have, verse 11, "...pastors and teachers." I pointed out, and it's important for you to notice, he didn't say, "...some, pastors; some, teachers." It's just, "...and some, pastors and teachers." It should be hyphenated because it's pastor-teacher. This is what we learn: You can be a teacher without being a pastor, but you can't be a pastor without being a teacher. The word "pastor" is Latin and it means shepherd. It's used in the Bible. There are three terms for this office. By the way, there are only two offices in the church, that of pastor and that of deacons. The pastor has other titles, that is, pastor, bishop, and elder. They are all used in Acts 20 interchangeably for the pastors in the churches of Ephesus. Whenever you hear those terms from Scripture, and they can be used today, pastor means shepherd, bishop means overseers, and then elders speak of their maturity. Those titles actually convey what they do. A pastor is a shepherd and

God's church is a flock of sheep, so he's to lead, feed, teach, and protect them.

The word "bishop" doesn't mean you have authority and power over all these churches, it means that whatever church the pastor's over, he oversees. That's what the word "bishop" means, overseer. He oversees the congregation. The word "elder" doesn't necessarily mean older in age, it means maturity. I started pastoring when I was about 22 years old. I was 25 years old when I got married, and I had a church of about 500 in the congregation. I've been doing it for a long time. But it means that you are mature, that you're growing. Paul wrote to Timothy, who was a young pastor, and said, "Don't let anyone despise your youth. Be an example. Timothy, God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, timidity, but of power, and love, and of a sound mind. Don't be intimidated."

I remember when I first started teaching the Bible in a home Bible study. If someone came into the group that was in their thirties, I freaked out that an old person just showed up. Seriously. "There's a really old guy here tonight. He must be 35." I remember that freaking me out because I was so young and so green. But for some reason I don't understand, I sure had a lot of growing and learning to do, God gave me that calling on my life. He gave me that gifting on my life to pastor-teach.

A pastor tends to be a person devoted to a single congregation. An evangelist goes out and preaches the gospel, a pastor stays with the believers and feeds and teaches them. R. Kent Hughes says the evangelist is the obstetrician; pastors are the pediatricians. I like that. We change the diapers. By the way, I changed a diaper this week. I won't describe it. It was radical, but I did it. Praise God! I had a granddaughter there and had to change a diaper.

Pastors, elders, bishops, and the second office is deacons. The word "deacon" means servants. They are first described in Acts 6, "...seven men...full of the Holy Ghost," chosen to wait on tables. Again, it's pretty easy to remember: In the New Testament there are only two offices in the church, that is, pastor and the deacon. The qualifications are listed in the Bible. Write them down, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, you ought to read them, and Titus 1:5-9. I probably should have done a whole night on pastor-teachers.

There's no indication in the Bible that a woman can fulfill the office of a pastor in the church. Women can serve the Lord, they can preach and teach the Word of God, but all of the qualifications in the New Testament—all of them, I challenge anyone to show me anything different—are a reference to men not people in the generic sense. Read 1 Timothy 3:1, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work...the husband of one wife," that pretty much says that we're talking about a man, and in the New Testament there were only men who pastored these churches, so I think that it is wrong for a woman to use the title pastor, bishop, or elder. It's not biblical or scriptural. A pastor's job is to feed, a pastor's job is to lead, a pastor's job is to protect. Read Acts 20:29-30. Again, I won't go into this because I've run out of time, but we're to feed, lead, and to protect. How did they feed? By preaching God's Word, 1 Peter 5:2-4, Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 4:12-16, and my favorite 2 Timothy 4 where Paul talks about preaching the Word. He tells Timothy, "Preach the Word." That's the pastor's job, to teach.

He's a pastor-teacher. He is to build up the body of Christ and to teach God's Word.

How do you find your gift, and we'll wrap this up. You start by studying what the Bible says about the spiritual gifts. They are found in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. Write those down and look them up. Pray and ask God to show you what your gift is, then you make a sober assessment of your own spiritual strengths and abilities, what God has given you a desire to do, what God has gifted and enabled you to do. Fourthly, you seek the counsel of a mature Christian. I believe that if God has given you a gift, called you to a specific ministry, others will recognize that gift. If no one recognizes your gift, there's a possibility, a really good one, that God hasn't given you that gift. It's going to be confirmed by others recognizing what God has done and God is doing in your life.

Write down Romans 12:1-2. Paul says, "I beseech," beg "you...by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," act of worship, "...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Do you know the analogy, and I'll close with this, of a parked car versus a moving car? A parked car is not very easy to turn. It's not going anywhere. Have you ever gotten in a car and tried to turn the steering wheel when it's parked? It's pretty hard to turn the wheel. The minute a car begins to move, you can steer it, direct it, guide it. If you have a desire to be used by God, get moving. Don't just sit and wait, get moving. God will open the doors. God will direct and guide you step by step.

If you just sit around waiting for some evangelist to call you to preach into a stadium of thousands and it hasn't happened yet, it will never happen. Teach Sunday school, usher, be a greeter, be a worship leader, lead a small group, be a prayer warrior, open your home. Do you know that God gives the gift of hospitality? Do you just love having people over, feeding people, ministering to people? What a precious gift that is in the body of Christ. Showing mercy to others, there are many gifts of the Spirit. Read those lists that I gave you, pray and ask God what your gift is, then use it in love to build up the body for the glory of God. Amen? Let's pray.