

A Study in the Ministry Gifts

Jesus taught His followers, “*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free*” (John 8:32). This Scripture has been applied in many different ways however it was never more relevant than it is in what God’s Word teaches concerning Spiritual Gifts. The teaching of Spiritual Gifts is absolutely liberating for all those who have a firm grasp on God’s teaching on this subject matter. Let me explain exactly what I mean.

Many sincere Christians, because they are not able to do certain things like someone else who seems so “*gifted,*” are frustrated and feel like something is missing in their life. This is because they do not understand what God’s Word teaches regarding Spiritual Gifts. They do not know their place in the body of Christ therefore; feel a sense of boredom in the performance of what they feel is their “*responsibilities*” in the work of the church. They don’t have the foggiest notion where they fit into the scheme of things, or the fact that God has a specific ministry that He has equipped them for. They do not realize that God has a special place – and a special purpose for them – which only they can fulfill in the great work He has to His church.

God never intended any person – especially Christians – to just take up oxygen and space on earth, but rather, He has a special purpose for every individual born in the annals of history – He has a reason for **YOUR** being! That’s what this study is all about – discovering the Spiritual Gifts God has endowed you with and just exactly how to use them for the greatest potential possible.

The questions I ask are:

- “*Do you understand how Spiritual Gifts operate within the body of Christ?*”
- “*Does every Christian have a Spiritual gift?*”
- “*What is the purpose of the various Spiritual Gifts mentioned in God’s Word?*”
- “*How does one obtain a Spiritual Gift?*”

I want you to realize how important and vital you are in the kingdom of God, how necessary you are to the body of Christ in your world. Your life can have great significance. A correct understanding of what the Bible teaches concerning Spiritual Gifts can bring a whole new dimension in your life, a whole new sense of fulfillment. You will come to appreciate how vital you are to the body of Christ.

The truth will set you free!

We must seek our answer from God’s Word and see exactly what it does teach concerning Spiritual Gifts. If we are to discover our Spiritual Gift and what God desires our life to accomplish then it is imperative that we examine God’s Word thoroughly to see precisely what He has to say concerning this matter. It is essential that we take time to pray for special insight into the personal ministry God has for us because, in order for us to become a channel whom God can work through to serve others in the Body of Christ – to reach out to those around us – as responsible disciples of Christ – we need to find the place God has for us in our own individual “*ministry.*”

To discover and adapt the Spiritual Gift (or Gifts) God has endowed us with, putting these Gifts into use, will provide strength, unity with other believers and growth in the Body of Christ.

God has ordained every believer with a ministry!

Jesus said, “*You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you – I appointed you. I have planted you – that you might bear fruit and keep on bearing: that your fruit may be lasting (that it may remain, abide). So that whatever you ask the Father in My name [as presenting all that I AM] He may give it to you*” (Amplified Bible).

The Church is not an organization or a religious club, but rather God intended it to be a functioning, living organism designed to penetrate society of all levels, and to declare and demonstrate in our world a new kind of power – a power otherwise totally unknown to men. It may not be easily recognized for what it is because it works very quietly. However, it is an exceedingly mighty power, the power of resurrection life, the power that is able to bring life out of death.

If there is anything our society is characterized by today it is that it is permeated with a kind of living death, a death that is part of our daily existence and manifests itself in a sense of despair, of depression, of emptiness, of the futility of living. It is in the humdrum of existence, in boredom and the frustration of lives that are longing for a sense of satisfaction and do not know where to turn in the restlessness of our age. But this is an exciting day in which to live because in our day and time, in this decade of the 21st century, the Spirit of God is healing a sluggish, ill, and faulty church.

The Holy Spirit desires to breath new life into old bones that have lain there so long they have begun to rattle. He wants to pour new wine into new wineskins. There is breaking out in the midst of old established forms of church life new exciting manifestations of the Holy Spirit at work among men. You can sense this everywhere. It is being accomplished by a return to these fundamental principles that the Apostle Paul outlines here in Ephesians concerning the intention of God for His body, the Church.

The human body is an amazing arrangement of many quite different functions. One cannot help but be astonished at the smoothness with which the body articulates a great many functions. There are the major senses of seeing, hearing, speaking, etc., all functioning as a unit in one body. The various organs all work together sharing in a marvelous harmony and yet each one doing something different. That is the characteristic that is so remarkably evident in God’s intention for the Body of Christ. In the human body *every* organ is a distinct and peculiar thing, having a function different than anything else in the body. You cannot substitute one organ for another. You never heard of a surgeon replacing a defective stomach with a pair of lungs. It cannot be done. Every organ must exercise its own function, that God gives him when he becomes a believer in Jesus Christ. Your Ministry Gift is your privileged function within the body of Christ. No one else can do it just as you would. Others may have similar gifts but they cannot do what God has called you to do in the Body of Christ.

This concept is every explicit in Scripture. Follow the reasoning of Ephesians 4. Verse 7 states, “*But grace [special ability] was given to each of us according to the measure of God’s gift.*” The God who designed the human body is the same God who designed the Body of Christ, which is to function in society and penetrate the life of this age. God’s desire to maintain that Body (the Church) in healthy maturity is what Ephesians 4 is all about.

Ephesians 4:11-16 is one of the most important passages for understanding what God's plan is for believers through the Body of Christ. In this passage God provides anointed the Apostle Paul to communicate spiritual Ministry Gifts, teaching God's Word with insight and accuracy, make possible for us to carry out the commission of the Church. Here is an outline of the believer's growth from spiritual childhood to maturity, from begin a victim of today's crisis to being a victory with Christ Jesus on the battlefield of spiritual warfare. Here the Church, the body of learning, growing, functioning saints, enables its own edification by the coordinated functioning of mature individuals.

Following the context of Ephesians, we see that the first three chapters Paul explains who we are as members of the invisible universal church – while in chapter 4 through 6 he exhorts us how to act as members of that visible local church. In 4:7-10, Paul describes how the *risen* Christ has given *each* and *every* Christian a spiritual grace-gift that we are now *each* responsible to use for His glory within His Church. The flow of thought is carried in verse 11, “*This risen Christ gave Ministry Gifts to His Church – some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and some to be teachers.*” This verse spells out five specific gifts, each involving believers within the Church.

The New Testament often compares the Church to a body. Christ is the Head, and we are the parts, the limbs, organs, and cells of His Body.

If a medical doctor, examined the physiology of the Body of Christ, the Ministry Gift of “*apostles*” might be compared to the skeletal/muscular system of the Body because they provide structure and strength – the Ministry Gift of “*prophets*” would be like the nervous system of the Body for they are a direct line of communication from the Head, revealing the mind of Christ, stimulating activity in line with God's revealed will – the Ministry Gift of “*evangelists*” would correspond to the digestive system of the Body because they take food from outside the body and transform and incorporate it into being a living part of the Body – taking those outside of the Body and facilitates their entrance into the Body of Christ by the Gospel – the Ministry Gift of “*pastor*” and “*teacher*” correspond to the circulatory and immune systems of the Body because their role is to feed and nourish the cells, and to be on guard against infections, in order to help keep the Body functioning with full health, vitality and strength.

God desires to build up the size and strength of the Body of Christ through these five-fold Ministry Gifts. These exist to equip believers for the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ – that is maintaining the health of the Church.

Who is to do these things? We have a strong tendency to think of these as “*professional*” Christians. These are what we call “*the clergy*” (terrible word) and “*reverends.*” Invariably we include in this class of people only those who have gone through some kind of specialized training school and spend their full time at this kind of work. It does, of course, include these, but it is not limited to them. There are men and women who have an apostolic ministry today, there are men and women who have prophetic gifts, there are men and women who are evangelists, there are men and women who are pastors and teachers – and not all of them by any means are “*professional*” Christians, in full time service. In every church there are those who are engaged in secular work who have these Ministry Gifts and who are to exercise them as well. I want to

make this point clear. The saints, the people – regular, normal, every day believers of the congregation – That is God’s intention! It is not just the job of what we today refer to as “*the clergy*,” but rather, it is the work of every believer, finding his Ministry Gift and fulfilling his ministry.

A terrible failure occurred in the life of the Church. Through the centuries, the Church gradually grew away from the simple system that made it such a powerful and impelling influence on society, and there came in gradually a terrible distortion from which we are still suffering today. The Church became identified with buildings, great massive cathedrals and imposing structures, and, unfortunately, these began to be referred to as “*the church*.” People’s thinking was fastened upon the building as the identifying symbol of the church – instead of the believers themselves. Along with this idea came a gradual transfer of responsibility to do the work of the ministry from “*the people*” unto to “*the clergy*.” However, Scripture makes it clear that “*the work of the ministry*” – and “*the building up of the Body of Christ*” – was commanded for “*all*” believers.

Ephesians 4:11 present this God-given Fivefold support ministries for the equipment of the saints unto the work of the ministry and unto the building up of the Body of Christ – that is maintaining the health of the Church.

When this distorted idea that the work of the ministry is done by “*professional full-time*” clergy, crept into the Church, it resulted in a terrible situation. The ministry was left to the professionals and the people just came to church to listen. The pastor has to minister to them, talk to them, encourage them, and try to keep them spiritually healthy, and, as the same time, do all the work of contacting the world. There soon came into being a very destructive idea that the job of the people was to bring the world into the building to hear the Gospel and the pastor’s to was to preach to them. Nothing has been more destructive of the life of the Body of Christ than that concept. Soon Christianity became a spectator sport, very much like the definition of football – eleven men down on the field, desperately in need of rest, and forty thousand people up in the grandstand desperately in need of exercise.

Is it any wonder this awful burden (that the clergy are largely responsible for in assuming) has exerted a terrible, unbearable pressure upon the clergy? They, of course, are not equal to this task – and God never intended them to be. Many pastors who honestly attempted it found themselves involved in endless, frustrating, demands that many cracked under it. That is one of the reasons why there have been so many emotional failures in the ministry

We need to return to the simple principles of the life designed for the Body of Christ. The result of its distortion has been a sadly impoverished body that has done little as far as the world is concerned, and has been largely as isolated section of life with a strong religious odor to it that has turned people away. The world holds the church in contempt because it is not doing anything relevant and meaningful in human society. Our need is to return to the original pattern.

Ephesians 4:9-10 presents the risen Christ Who has triumphed over Satan and all the powers of hell, then verse 11 states that this victorious, triumphant Conqueror “*gave*” certain Ministry Gifts to the Church – *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers*. The risen, victorious Christ gave these “*Fivefold Ministry Gifts*” to various believers – (each believer receiving one, or more) – to form the completeness of the whole body – the Body of Christ – the Church. Notice clearly verse 12 answers the question as to why He gave them. It continues with

the preposition “for” – or “because.” Paul clearly states the reason Christ gave this Ministry Gifts was for – “*the perfection [maturing] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [building up, strengthening] of the Body of Christ.*”

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to divinely present this Five-fold ministry of the Church – five separate offices described in verse 11. It is our responsibility to recognize and employ all five of these Ministry Gifts or be guilty of neglecting the Scripture as it is outlined here.

What these Ministry Gifts are and how they are to be utilized today is the purpose of this study.

It is my desire in the study to define each of these Ministry Gifts from the pages of God’s Word and see just what God intended them to be – to see what they were and what they are today. I believe that we will see that, far from being no longer meant to continue in the Church (as many seem to teach), when we are finished I believe that we will understand that God intended these Ministry Gifts to continue through the entire Church age – and, hopefully, we will be able to see how they were deliberately designed by God to operate in the lives of believers.

Paul begins describing that Jesus, the risen, triumphant, conquering Christ, gave Ministry Gifts to every believer within the Body of Christ for the specific purpose of “*equipping the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ.*” Together, these Ministry Gifts encourage the Body of Christ and equip the Church for works of service so that individual members of any particular church would be about using their gifts in a way that would encourage one another, as well as reaching out to the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God has entrusted each one of us with a Ministry Gift (or Gifts) to be used in the Body of Christ in a way that encourages others and brings glory to God.

A “*Spiritual Gift*” is God working through the believer by divine enablement, providing strength and power to accomplish God’s will in the believer’s life so that, as a channel of God’s grace, Christ’s life and His Kingdom may continue to be made manifest.

I believe that the first thing in studying the Biblical subject of Spiritual Gifts is to realize that God’s Word gives three distinct, different, chapters in the Bible on the this all important subject. Many students of the Bible “*lump*” these chapters together, listing the 20-some gifts all in the same category as if they were all for the same purpose. There seems to be the tendency to mix them all up like scrambled eggs – or toasted salad – as if the all were given for the same function. However, let’s keep them separated as God gives them and see precisely what God says about them.

The three different passages of Scripture that teach on Spiritual Gifts are:

1 Corinthians 12:4-8 – Romans 12:6-8 – Ephesians 4:11

Careful examination of the context of these passages of Scripture will reveal that the Bible makes the following distinction of Spiritual Gifts:

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 is referring to “***Manifestation Gifts***” – Supernatural manifestations in which the Holy Spirit enables the believer to respond in some particular

situation supernaturally. These Spiritual Gifts are listed in God's Word as Nine Supernatural manifestations.

First are given **THREE REVEALTION GIFTS:**

1. "**A Word of Wisdom**"
God-given supernatural "*knowing*" what to do, or say, in some particular situation.
2. "**A Word of Knowledge**"
God-given supernatural "*facts*" from the mind of God
3. "**Discerning of spirits**"
God-given "*discernment*" into the spirit world

Then, **THREE POWER GIFTS**

1. "**Faith**"
God-given "*ability to expect*" an extraordinary demonstration of the power of God
2. "**Miracles**"
God-given "*intervention*" in the ordinary course of nature to work His will.
3. "**Gifts of Healing**"
God-given belief in praying for the sickness, diseases and infirmities.

THREE SPOKEN GIFTS

1. "**Tongues**"
God-given supernatural utterance in an unknown language
2. "**Interpretation**"
God-given supernatural showing forth the meaning of the unknown tongue
3. "**Prophecy**"
God-given inspiration to give His message, supernaturally

I dealt with these Spiritual Gifts in my study on "*The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit,*" – in some 75 pages of a thorough examination – so I will not repeat that study here.

Ephesians 4:11 refers to "***Motivational Gifts***" – God-given innate trait which motivates a person's life.

1. "**Perception**"
God-given intuitive sense to discern inner motives
2. "**Serving**"
God-given innate desire to be of service to others
3. "**Teaching**"
God-given ability to teach others
4. "**Exhortation**"
God given capacity to encourage others
5. "**Giving**"
God-given capability to acquire substance and a fondness to share

6. **“Administration”**
God-given skill to organize resources, abilities and efforts of others
7. **“Compassion”**
God-given compassion to show great love and deep feeling

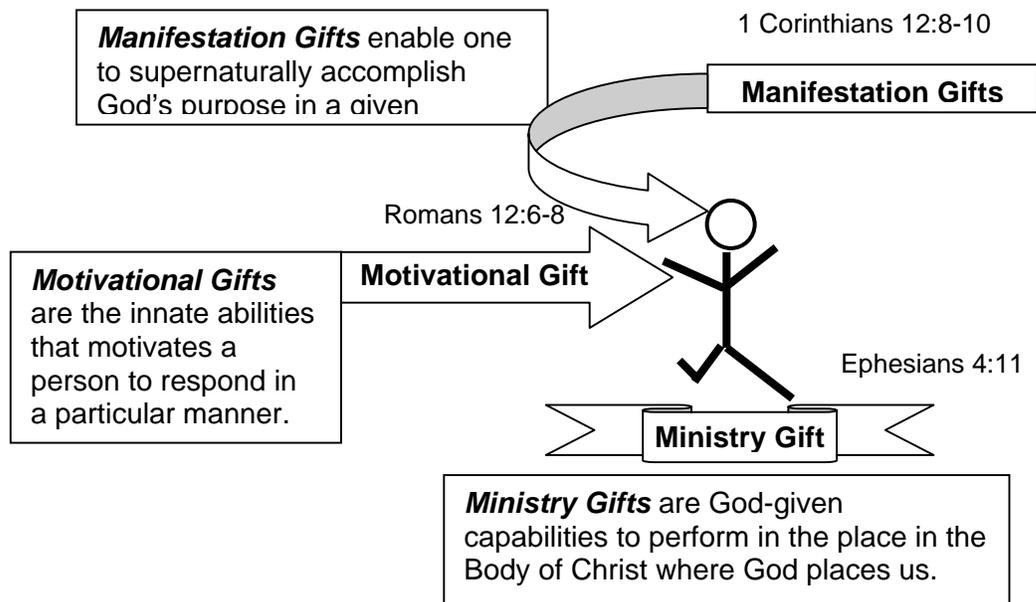
I have also prepared an in depth study on this subject of *“The Motivation Gifts”* and, therefore, will not go into that study here. What I want to accomplish in these lessons on *“The Ministry Gifts”* is to examine what God’s Word teaches in Ephesians 4:7-12 concerning every believer’s service to the Body of Christ

While there are *only* three chapters in the Bible that deal with Spiritual Gifts – that is,

- **1 Corinthians 12: 8-10**, *The Manifestations of the Holy Spirit* in the believer’s life;
- **Romans 12:6-8**, *The Motivation Gifts* God endowed us with;
- **Ephesians 4:11**, *The Ministry Gifts* that God has gifted each believer with: *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers*.

The various *“Spiritual Gifts”* each serve their own distinct purpose and are not to be just shuffled together, but rather, each group of Spiritual Gifts are to be received as they are revealed in God’s Word. Each group has its own function in the believer’s life.

The following diagram hopefully will explain my understanding of what Scripture teaches on the subject of the three various distinct and separate objectives of Spiritual Gifts given in these three chapters from the Bible.



God’s Word teaches, concerning the Church – every born-again believer – that we are to function as a *“Body.”*

1 Corinthians 12 states, *“For just as the body is a unity and yet has many parts, and all the parts, though many, form (only) one body, so it is with Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One...For the body does not consist of one limb pr organ but of many...God has adjusted (mingled, harmonized and subtly proportioned the*

parts of the whole) body, giving the greater honor and richer endowment to the inferior parts which lack (apparent importance)” [verses 12,14, 24 – Amplified Bible]

Romans 12 states, “*For as in one physical body we have many parts (organs, members) and all of these parts do not have the same function or use, So we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ, the messiah, and individually we are parts one of another – mutually dependent on one another” [verses 4-5 – Amplified Bible].*

Ephesians 4 states, “*There is one body...One God and Father of us all, Who is above all (Sovereign over all), pervading all and (living) in us all. Yet grace (God’s unmerited favor) was given to each of us individually – not indiscriminately, but in different ways – in proportion to the measure of Christ’s (rich and bounteous) gift. Therefore it is said, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive – He led a train of vanquished foes – and he bestowed gifts on men...” [verses 4a, 6-8 – Amplified Bible].*

The point is, that the Church – you and me – and every born-again believer – together are the Body of Christ in the world today. *Everyone* of us are a part of that body and each of us are to function wherever it is that God has placed us.

We are . . .

- born with special, innate abilities called *Motivational Gifts* which we are to use for God’s purposes.
- to be in tune to the Holy Spirit’s workings and allow Him to use us as a channel to work through in any given situation He desires to do so in the *Manifestations of the Holy Spirit*.
- to give special place to perform in the *Ministry Gifts* that God has endowed us with.

**This study is on those “*Ministry Gifts of the Holy Spirit*”
taken from Ephesians 4:11.**

One of the great mysteries of the Bible is “***Incarnation***” – “*God manifested in flesh.*” It is almost too much for our mortal minds to comprehend – Almighty God of the whole universe taking up His abode within human flesh! No mortal mind will ever be able to understand that!

When Jesus was living on earth He lived a physical body. God, the Son, “*manifested Himself in human flesh.*” Now that He has ascended back into heaven to His Heavenly Father, the Church – every born-again believer – is an **incarnation** of God in flesh. God desires to live His life through every believer’s earthly existence.

In fact, Jesus said, “*It is expedient for you [it is profitable for you – it is to your advantage] – that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come unto you” (John 16:7).*

One of the most amazing – if not the most amazing – concepts taught in God’s Word is that **NOW**, in this present time, God works through the Body of Christ – which is the Church –

or every born-again believer! When Jesus said, “*I will build My Church,*” (Matthew 16:18), He was not speaking of building an edifice, an organization, or some particular denomination, but, rather, He was speaking of **constructing a Body of believers through whom His life, (the very Divine life of the Lord Jesus Christ), could manifest itself!**

“**Incarnation**” – “*God manifested in flesh*” – did not end when Jesus Christ’s physical body was glorified and ascended into heaven. No! God desires to manifest His life through “*the Body of Christ*” – the Church – that is **every born-again believer** – on earth today!

Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it. If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter [the Holy Spirit], that **He may abide with you for ever**; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for **He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you**. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: **because I live, ye shall live also**. At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and **ye in Me, and I in you**” John 14:12-20.*

With the Biblical truth that there are three distinctive groups of Spiritual Gifts which God has made available to the believer, the question arises, “*Are any of them for me or are they just for specially called ministers of the Gospel?*” The answer is that that God tells us in His Word that these three areas of distinctive Spiritual Gifts –

- **Motivational Gifts** that stimulates the unique drives within the believer
- **Manifestation Gifts** of the Holy Spirit’s anointing, channeled through the believer’s life, on precise occasion as He chooses – and
- **Ministry Gifts**, or the position the believer has in the work of the Body of Christ, the Church) – are all for *every* believer to experience.

God desires **every** believer:

- (1) To realize what his ***Motivational Gifts*** are in order that he can understand why he reacts the way he does to each situation – also to be able to understand why others react the way they do.
- (2) To employ the ***Manifestations of the Holy Spirit*** in each believer’s life as the situation arises.
- (3) To be aware that there is a special ***Ministry Gifts*** for every believer in the Body of Christ.

How important is it for a believer to understand and know what Spiritual Gifts God desires to exercise through his life?

- It is essential if one is to know God’s will for his life.
- Understanding of the Spiritual Gifts will enable one to discover his spiritual job description.
- The believer can take his appropriate place in the Body of Christ

- He will begin to see his life as a channel for God's grace
- He can avoid over-commitment and burnout
- He will become more appreciative of what others are called to be and do
- He will understand the need of unity of the Spirit
- He will be a part of the maintaining the true purpose of the church
- He will be a part of the increasing total lay involvement.

Though there are only three chapters in Scripture dealing with Spiritual Gifts, there is a verse in 1 Peter 4:10-11 that speaks of Spiritual Gifts. The King James Version renders this passage as, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Referring to the 26 Translations of the Bible we notice that, first of all, this passage states that "every one has received a special gift that is received as an 'endowment' given by God." We are commanded "as good stewards, or 'trustees,' of this endowment, to be of service to one another." Verse 11 states that, in the employment of these gifts, we are to "speak the utterances of God and serve others, relying on the strength which God supplies. And, in all things so act as that the glory may be God's through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion through endless ages, Amen!"

It seems extremely clear that every believer has a gift – or "gifts" – and we are commanded by God's Word to allow them to function through our lives for the benefit of the Body of Christ – the Church.

To keep our study clear, I remind you again that there are three distinct and different classes of gifts – Motivational Gifts – Manifestations Gifts [Supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit through the believer's life] – and "Ministry Gifts." This study concerns the Ministry Gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11.

You will note from the following verses after Ephesians 4:11 that the Bible tells us that these Ministry Gifts were given "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till 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 fulness of Christ: 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; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:12-16 – King James Version).

Again, looking at other translations we clearly see that God has endowed every believer with certain gifts for the "spiritual maturing of believers in Christ to equip them for ministry – to build up of the Body of Christ [the Church] . . .

- until we all finally attain unity which comes by faith and a fuller, perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ –

as immature as they did before they turned two, you'd be on the phone looking for professional help. Why? Because although we all love babies, we expect those babies to grow.

When God calls us to be His children, we all start out as spiritual “*babies*.” Jesus said that before we can ever be a part of God’s family and enter heaven, we must be born again (John 3:3). Peter tells us that we all start out our Christian lives as “*newborn babies*” (1 Peter 2:2). This is our spiritual starting point.

However, God does not want any of His children to remain baby-like forever. Just like every other father, God wants His children to grow! Specifically, God wants us to grow up and to mature by continually becoming more like His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

This life-changing passage in Ephesians 4:11-16 explains this concept more clearly than any other part of the Bible. This passage is a central, core passage that will help us to understand why our involvement in the Body of Christ is so vitally important to our spiritual life, and what we need to do in order to make sure that we will personally grow up as a Christian the way that God desires us to grow.

The 11th verse of Ephesians 4 is a thumbnail statement inserted in between repeated admonitions on how Christians ought to “*walk*” – (Ephesians 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). The *immediate* context involves the unity and oneness of the Body of Christ, the Church. Each member of this body has been given “*grace*” (4:7) to help in the ongoing endeavor of the Church (and the unity that will result). The God-given “*grace*” mentioned in 4:7, of course, has reference to the Ministry Gifts listed in verse 11. This “*grace*” has been bestowed upon every believer in the Body of Christ (namely, “*apostles*,” “*prophets*,” “*evangelists*,” “*pastors*” and “*teachers*”) to “*equip the Body of Christ to do the work of the Church*” – and, in the process the unity of the Spirit will be maintained (4:3), and the unity of the faith realized (4:13).

THE FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY GIFTS OF EPHESIANS 4:11

One way to remember the five Ministry Gifts is to hold up your hand in front of you, as you close it the thumb holds the whole hand and represents the Ministry Gift of “*apostles*,” holding the other gifts together. As you open your hand, the pointing finger represents the Ministry Gift of “*prophets*,” pointing and revealing God’s messages; your tall finger as the Ministry Gift of “*evangelists*,” the “*great ones*” needed to spread the Good News; the ring finger represents the Ministry Gift of “*pastors*” [Greek tradition say the ring finger has a direct connection to the heart – the reason the wedding band is worn there]– and the little finger as the Ministry Gift of “*teachers*,” giving balance to the complete hand

1. Apostles

Many seem to have the idea that Jesus’ twelve disciples were the only “*apostles*,” however such is not the truth. In fact there are twenty-four (24) apostles listed in the New Testament: (1) Simon Peter and (2) his brother ,Andrew [Matthew 10:2]; (3) James, son of Zebedee and (4) John his brother [Matthew 10:2]; (5) Philip and (6) his brother, Bartholomew [Matthew 10:3]; (7) James, son of Alphaeus and (8) Judas his brother [Luke 6:16]; (9) Matthew, son of Alphaeus, perhaps brother of James and Judas [Mark 2:14; Luke 6:15]; (10) Thomas [Matthew 10:3]; (11) Simon Zelotes, brother of James and Judas, according to tradition [Luke

6:15]; **(12)** Judas Iscariot [Matthew 10:4]; **(13)** Matthias [Acts 1:26]; **(14)** Barnabas [1 Corinthians 9:5-6; Acts 13:1-3; Acts 14:4, 14; Galatians 2:9]; **(15)** Andronicus [Romans 16:7]; **(16)** Junia [Romans 16:7]; **(17)** Apollos [1 Corinthians 4:6-9]; **(18)** James, the Lord's brother [Galatians 1:19 & 2:6; James. 1:1]; **(19)** Silas [1 Thessalonians 1:1 & 2:6]; **(20)** Timothy [1 Thessalonians 1:1 & 2:6]; **(21)** Titus [2 Corinthians 8:23]; **(22)** Epaphroditus [Philippians 2:25]; **(23)** Paul [Galatians 1:1 & 2:8]; **(24)** Jesus Christ [Hebrews 3:1].

In addition to these 24 listed in the New Testament, God's Word reveals that there were possibly other during that time – "*apostles*" who are used of God within the Body of Christ. – in this age today – and will continue to be until the Church Age is complete –

The English word, "*apostles*," is translated from the Greek word, "apostolos," – [actually two Greek words: "*apo*" meaning "*from*," and "*stello*" meaning "*to send*."] These Greek words put together as they are has the meaning of "*a delegate*" or "*an ambassador*" – one sent with full power of attorney to act in the place of another, the sender remaining behind to back up the one sent. In the case of Christians it means God sends them to do what He, Himself would do if He were present. This Greek word is found 81 Times in the New Testament and translated "*apostle*" 78 times – "*messenger*" twice (2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25); and – once it is rendered as, "*he that is sent*" (John 13:16).

The intended meaning is, "*one who is sent to perform an act, or on a mission.*" It means the same as our word for "*missionary*," or a "*church planter*," that is, "*one sent to a specific area with direction from God.*" It could also refer to someone whom God has given a special assignment and anointed of God to proclaim it. It has the idea of one who has the ability to lead others into new ventures, new territory and fresh ideas.

As one reads the New Testament they realize that one of the jobs of the apostle was to lay foundations, to lay a major framework, to be instrumental in building and forming a basic support structure for the Body of Christ – the Church.

Therefore, missionaries fall into this category as well as those who go into new areas to open pioneer churches. In Scripture "*apostles*" were those whom God used to bring forth a special emphasis on some Biblical truth – [one sent with a special message] under God-ordained direction.

"*Apostles*" were gifted at being sent on a mission to bring benevolent help to others. (See 2 Corinthians 6:23, [*messages of the church*] should be translated "*apostles*") – Philippians 2:25 where Epaphroditus was sent as a "*minister*" [apostle] to minister to the needs of Paul)

We tend to think of an "*apostle*" as some mighty man of God up front leading large groups of people, performing supernatural, visible miracles, loudly proclaiming God's Word. Of course, this is true, however, the Minister Gift of an "*apostle*" could just as well be some quiet, unassuming, believer who is used by God on a mission to a fellow worker at their place of employment, a next door neighbor, or some other acquaintance – to be God's "*apostle*" to them.

It isn't difficult to realize that missionaries, or those who pioneer churches in some new area, or someone who declares and emphasizes a special, appropriate Bible reality, as being endowed with the Ministry Gift of "*apostle*." However, in our culture today, it is challenging to

realize that God also uses the *average* believer – (*butcher, baker, candlestick maker* – be they *laborer, housewife* or those considered “*just a common average individual*”) – those we refer to as, “*a layperson*” – regular people whom God has gifted with the Ministry Gift of an “*apostle*” – the ability to being some Biblical truth, “*sent*” to enhance a special task in a forcible, revealing manner to someone on a particular occasion.

Who are those gifted with the Ministry Gift of “Apostle” today?

It may be difficult for us to accept the fact of “*apostles*” today because of the misconception that has come down through the years that all apostles have been done away with – that only those living in Jesus’ day and the first century of the early Church were the only “*apostles*.” However, in studying God’s Word we see that this “*grace*” was given to believers for the “*maturing of the saints – the work of the ministry – and the edifying [strengthening] of the Church*” (See Ephesians 4:7 & 12). It is *still* God’s desire that His saints mature, do the work committed to them and strengthen each other!

There are those whom God uses to bring new emphasizes to a Biblical truth, and He gives them the ability to reveal this reality in a powerful, forceful manner – to establish some new venture in a new territory – these are modern “*apostles*” today in every since of the Scriptures.

God has gifted certain believers with the ability, not only to speak, or act, as an “*apostle*” to large crowds – but even on a one-to-one basis. God does enable some believers to see a need and allow themselves to be anointed by the Holy Spirit to go to some individual and give God’s declaration, or perform some apostolic act at God’s prescribed timing.

God gave the Ministry Gift of “*apostle*” to the Church for the entire Church Age – from the day of Pentecost until Christ’s return for His Bride – it just may be that God desires to use you to perform an apostolic function for Him. It could be perhaps some believer, unknown and unrecognized as an outstanding minister, in some local assembly, that God chooses to use in the Ministry Gift of an apostle to deliver a powerful message or show forth some supernatural miracle.

2. Prophets

Continuing our study of the Ministry Gifts given to this Church Age by the Lord we come to the second gift, the Ministry Gift of “*prophet*.” Again these gifts are given to this Church Age to prepare believers for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up.

The language in Ephesians 4:11 makes a clear distinction that the Ministry Gift of “*prophet*” is a different Ministry Gift than the “*apostle*” – This is especially brought out in the Greek text. The Greek makes clear that, though the gifts compliment and support each other, there is a distinction between each of these Five-fold Ministry Gifts. That is, they are distinct from each other

WHAT IS THE MINISTRY GIFT OF A PROPHET?

A “*prophet*” is one who has deep insight into spiritual things. Those with the Ministry Gift of Prophet have the ability to hear from God and relate it to others. In Scripture prophets were those who would tell forth the Word of God. The ministry of a prophet is not so much a

“foretelling,” though it may include that, it is mainly a “telling forth” of the Word of the Lord. A prophet speaks a “now” word to the Church. The Bible teaches that the Ministry Gift of Prophet is given for *edification, exhortation, and comfort* (1 Corinthians 14:3). This WILL BE the effect when God speaks a fresh word into a situation.

The Ministry Gift of “*apostle*” has more to do with works, actions and supernatural signs, the Ministry Gift of “*prophet*” has more to do with a message from God. A prophet is one who speaks for God who unfolds the mind of God.

In the early Church before the New Testament itself was completed, prophets spoke directly by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uttering the truths now recorded in the New Testament. They were men who unfolded what God taught and thus the Church was galvanized and motivated to fulfill the Great Commission. While the New Testament is now complete, no man – or prophet – can add too or subtract from God’s Holy Word (Revelation 22:18-19), however, God desires to use those whom He chooses and who are willing to yield themselves to Him in the Ministry Gift of Prophet.

“*Prophets*” speak for God (Hebrews 1:1; Acts 3:21 & 15:32). Sometimes they foretold the future (Acts 11:28 & 21:10-11, and Luke 24:44). Prophecy is also one of the Manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28) and those who exercised this gift were called prophets (Ephesians 4:11 and Acts 11:27-28 & 13:1-2).

Looking at the Old Testament, where it speaks of “*the school of the prophets*” (1 Samuel 19:20, the Hebrew word from which this is translated, “*lahaqah*” means, “*to gather; an assembly; a company.*” From this assembly of the prophets comes the idea of the school of the prophets. It seems that men who desired to be prophets gathered together to learn the ways of God and to be trained in divine matters.

These prophets sought God and were anointed with the Holy Spirit as in other periods and at other times. Certain men and women in every age have been anointed as prophets and were spiritually minded and hungry for the Lord. There were such gatherings from Samuel's day on (1 Samuel 19:20 & 24 and 10:5-12; 1 Kings 18:4 & 13 and 19:1, 10, 14). Those who gathered in Elijah and Elisha's day were called the “*sons of the prophets*” (1 Kings 20:35, 41; 2 Kings 2:2-7, 15 – 4:1, 38 – 5:22 – 6:1 & 9:1). They were the special servants of God (1 Kings 17:13, 23 – 21:10 – 24:2 – 2 Chronicles 20:20 – 24:19 – 29:25 – 36:16 – Ezra 9:11 – Nehemiah. 9:26-32 & Isaiah 29:10).

In 1 Samuel 19:20 Samuel stood among these “*sons of the prophets*” as their appointed leader or president of the school. Elijah and Elisha were heads of the prophets in their time (2 Kings 2:2-7, 15 & 6:1). In such gatherings there seemed to be a general spirit of prophecy that would come upon all present.

The prophets who wrote the New Testament were infallible – “*Holy men of God spoke as they were ‘moved’ [literally ‘propelled’] by the Holy Spirit*” – Today, however, God’s Word is complete, finished, finalized and no one can add to it. We must carefully consider what a prophet today says, and if there is anything that is out of accord with God’s revealed Word, it is to be rejected.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 teaches, “*Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*” Paul refers to this kind of examination in 1 Corinthians 14:29 when he says, “*Let two or three prophets speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.*” – The idea is of weighing carefully to see if what is said agrees with the written Word of God.

Jesus warned of false prophets when He said, “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*” (Matthew 7:15-16). Jesus says, you will know them not by their gift, but by their fruit. It is not that the gift is deficient, the vessels in which the gifts are used can be imperfect or wanting.

Peter also points out how we must be on the watch for those who would try to come into our midst to bring false teachings and prove themselves to be false prophets. He wrote, “*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction*” (2 Peter 2:1).

The apostle John also gives us a warning in 1 John 4:1, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1).

The warnings in all of these passages are that we must be on the watch for those who come into our midst assuming the role of a prophet of God, but, indeed, are false prophets. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures “*prophets*” were known by the local body of believers – mostly those spiritually birthed in the local church whom God anointed with the Ministry Gift of Prophet for the maturing of the believers, for the work of the ministry and for strengthening of the Body of Christ.

While we must be careful not to gullibly accept every word that is said to be from the Lord, there is, however, a place for the Ministry Gift of Prophet today. Dedicated, sincere, believers receive a thought within their spirit, something they did not just dream up, but rather, it came as a distinct, pronounced word from God and, when it is shared, it bears witness with one’s spirit that God has spoken through a human vessel.

Remember: “*The Gift is not deficient, but the vessel used can be!*”

There’s a passage in James 5:10 that reveals that “*prophets*” will be examples of suffering and patience.

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (James 5:10).

It seems clear that God intended the Five-fold Ministry Gifts given in Ephesians 4:11 to be operative throughout this entire Church Age – from Pentecost to Christ’s return. A prophet is not only the person standing before a crowd being used of God, but God can use as a believer as a prophet on a one-to-one basis. This is, some sincere, dedicated, Spirit-filled, yielded believer may receive a word – a thought that they did not dream up, or imagine, but comes as a distinct, pronounced prompting from God to share a word He desires for someone to hear – a word that

will bless, encourage, exhort or comfort – and a believer, perhaps just over the backyard fence, over a cup of coffee, at the place of business or in a neighbors home – is pressed in his spirit to speak a word of the Lord to some needy soul.

The believer must at all times keep his spirit in tune with the Holy Spirit – not attempting to conjure, or coerce, in the flesh some thought on his own, but rather, be ready, if God should prompt him in his spirit, to speak for Him under any circumstance, he could be lead. Perhaps it would e a word to someone going through a very difficult, circumstance and God stimulates and provokes the believer’s inner spirit to speak a word of encouragement. Or, it just may be that a fellow believer, who has deep confidence in your walk with God, is involved with some wrongdoing and God reveals to your spirit that a word of rebuke is in order and God gives you the exact words of admonition that will kindly reprimand a brother or sister in the Lord. Or, perchance, a brother or sister in the Lord is at a crossroads in their life and is seeking recommendation, or direction, and God gives you words of counsel, or guidance, for them.

Yes! God desires to use dedicated, yielded believers today as vessels in the Ministry Gift of “*Prophet!*”

3. Evangelist

We come to the third of the Five-fold Ministry Gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11, the gift of “*Evangelist.*” Keep in mind that these Five-fold Ministry Gifts were given by the Lord to endure during the entire Church Age – from the Day of Pentecost until He returns to earth again.

The word translated “evangelists” in the New Testament come from the Greek word, “*euangelistes,*” and has the meaning of, “*a bringer of glad tidings.*” This Greek word is used only here, in Acts 21:8 and 2Timothy 4:5. The word has the reference of “*one who declares the good news of Jesus Christ*” (Romans 10:15). After our risen Lord’s ascension, one of the Five-fold Ministry Gifts He gave was that of “*evangelist*” – one with a special burden for the lost and enjoys special gifting as a soul-winner.

Together with the apostle and the prophet there was also the evangelist by which the Body of Christ – the Church – would be build up and grow – those with a special gift for communicating the Gospel in relevant, compelling terms to others – one who has a special, and unique, manner of leading souls to Christ.

There is a sense in which every Christian is to be an evangelist in that he speaks as a witness of his faith. But these evangelists are those with a specialized gift who have a wonderful attraction for and ability to speak to others. God has endowed them with the a special knack that almost compels people to listen to the good news of Jesus Christ.

There are, of course, those whom God has used down through Church history who are endowed and anointed to preach with power to those who do not know Jesus Christ. This special anointing on their lives enables them to draw a net around sinners with keen effectiveness. Billy Graham is just such a man that is outstanding in this field today. He is a true evangelist, for he compels people to listen and they respond to the good news of Jesus Christ.

However, we must not fall into the danger of accepting the modern interpretation of what an evangelist is from our culture of this day – to limit or define “*evangelist*” as those who travel

and preach, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Long after Philip no longer was traveling he is referred to as “an evangelist” (Acts 21:8). And Paul instructed Timothy to “*do the work of an evangelist*” (2 Timothy 4:5).

Today we are apt to think of an “*evangelist*” as someone who travels about speaking in special services sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But any believer wherever they are planted, in whatever community God has placed them, can be an evangelist – especially if God has gifted them with the ministry Gift of Evangelist. When God gifts someone as an evangelist He will open doors and provide opportunity to share this good news. However the Ministry Gift of Evangelist is a God given ability to communicate the Gospel in relative terms to the lost, not just to the masses, or large crowds, but also on one-to-one basis God will give even an unknown, unrecognized believer the gift and the opportunity to speak to a fellow worker or neighbor powerful, compelling, convincing manner.

The evangelist seems to have an abundance of opportunities, partly because with this gift his love for the lost and his boldness is always looking for and taking advantage of such opportunities. Those with this Ministry Gift of Evangelist take great delight in sharing the Gospel whenever and wherever they may happen to be and the Lord uses that as His brings people and the evangelist together. Those with this gift will have this desire and with this yearning they will see fruit of their labor as people come to Christ.

4. Pastor

The fourth Ministry Gift given by our risen, ascended Lord listed in Ephesians 4:11 is the Ministry Gift of “*Pastor.*”

The Greek word that is translated “*pastor*” in Ephesians 4:11 is “*poimen*,” however this word is also translated, “*shepherd*” 16 times in the New Testament – (Matthew 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Mark 6:34; 14:27; Luke 2:8-20; John 10:2-16; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25). The Greek word for “*pastor*” and “*shepherd*” are one and the same Greek word.

The Old Testament Hebrew word that is translated as “*pastor*” is “*ra'ah*,” and comes from the word that means “*to tend a flock.*” This Hebrew word is translated “*pastor*” 8 times in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 2:8; 3:15; 10:21; 12:10; 17:16; 22:22; & 23:1-2) and “*shepherd*” 63 times.

This word translated “*pastor*,” in both Old and New Testaments, has to do with the one who shepherds sheep – cares for and feeds a flock. In Ephesians 4:11, the Ministry Gift of “*pastor*” is a believer with a special aptitude to love, feed, train, and correct those whom God has entrusted them with – and someday must give an account of them.

It is difficult for us to change our mind-set on what a “*pastor*” is from the Scriptural point of view because of our use of the word of one who called to lead a group of believers – a large or small congregation – as their full-time “*pastor.*” Denominational use of the word “*pastor*” has muddled its original significance and application, creating unscriptural, misunderstanding of the original meaning of the word. It has brought confusion, that is, misunderstanding, if one sincerely desires to follow the Biblical meaning of the word. It will take a fundamental alteration of our thinking.

Of course, it is *not* unscriptural to call one “*pastor*” who is the leader of a church – a group of believers – because his position is that of a “*shepherd*.” However, Scripture reveals that the Ministry Gift of “*pastor*” can refer to one who is gifted to “*shepherd*” others – perhaps one or two, or a small group of a few within the larger body of believers that we refer to as “*a church*.” This Ministry Gift can be an *ordinary*, dedicated believer within a congregation who is gifted to spend time with others, pray with them, sharing principles of Christian growth, encouraging, even admonishing them. God, by His sovereign will sees fit to gift some believers as instruments through whom His power flows as a “*shepherd*” to others. It is not their own wisdom or mental ability that they rely upon but they seek God’s will and are led by the Holy Spirit to minister to those whom God has entrusted them with. God endows them with the Ministry Gift of Pastor to lead others to grow to maturity.

The responsibility of the shepherd was to watch over the sheep, to provide protection and to see that his sheep were fed. So, a spiritual “*pastor*” sees to it that his sheep are provided substantial and nourishing *meals*, providing those whom he is responsible for with spiritual food.

There needs to be an understanding of what God’s Word has to say concerning “*Elders*” – “*Bishops*” – and – “*Overseers*” – of the local assemblies. However, that is another Bible study that we will not take the time to deal with here.

The point to be made here is that in addition to a “*pastor*” of a local congregation, God endows some with the Ministry Gift of Pastor, with God-given ability to be a shepherd to one, two or three – or a small group of believers – within the local assembly of believers.

Ephesians 4:11 teaches that not only are there those whom we call a “*pastor*” over a local body of believers, but God also gives other believers within the congregation a “*pastor’s heart*” – those whom we would probably refer to as a “*layperson*” who is a “*shepherd*” in every sense of the Biblical meaning of the word to a much smaller group within the larger congregation – perhaps just one or two – conceivably with some who have recently been born into the kingdom of God, those who have desperate needs of some kind, or someone who is not mature in Christ as yet and need maturity, ministry or edifying (that is “*strengthening*”) – the very purpose of these Ministry Gifts – Ephesians 4:12.

5. Teachers

The word translated, “*teachers*” comes from the Greek word, “*didaskalos*,” and is translated “*master*” 47 times ***in the Gospels***, (40 times of Christ), translated “*doctor*” in Luke. 2:46 and “*teacher*” in John. 3:2 and Acts 13:1. The Greek word is always translated as “*teacher*” ***in the epistles***, with one exception – James 3:1.

This Greek word, “*didaskalos*” means to teach, or to give instruction. The Ministry Gift of “*Teacher*” is one who has been gifted by God with a special ability to take the truths of God’s Word and to teach them to others.

Of course there are those endowed with the Ministry Gift of teaching that are well know and the general public has become aware of because of their ability to stand before large crowds and teach God’s Word, however, it is also God’s will for many believers to be gifted, and endowed, with the Ministry Gift of Teacher that may only teach one or two, or, perhaps, a small group. It may be that God brings a neighbor, a casual acquaintance or a fellow employee into

their life of a believer and God enables that believer with the Ministry Gift of Teacher to teach that person – or persons – truths from God’s Word.

We are all ministers!

Look at Ephesians, chapter 4 in its entire context:

*“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation [your calling] wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness [humility] and meekness, [gentleness] with longsuffering, [patience] forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring [diligently seeking] to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [oneness of the Spirit by binding peace upon yourselves] There is one body, [the Body of Christ – the Church] and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. **But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.** Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and **gave gifts unto men.** (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.) – [As a result of Christ’s accomplishment of dying for man’s sin, descending into Paradise and leading the Old Testament saints into Heaven, this risen, conquering, victorious Lord gave “gifts” unto the Church!] – And He gave some, **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors** and **teachers**; [Why were these gifts given?] – For the perfecting [maturing] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, [to equip His people for service] for the edifying of the body of Christ [to strengthen, or build up]: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, [until we all finally attain unto the unity that is given by faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, by a fuller knowledge of the Son of God] unto a perfect man, [until we reach the ideal full grown man] unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ [the full standard of the perfection of Christ]: That we henceforth be no more children, [infant babies] tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, [tossed back and forth on the waves and carried about with every changing wind of doctrine] by the sleight of men, [through the trickery and the craftiness of men, towards the snares of error] and cunning craftiness, [the crafty rogues and their deceitful schemes] whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: [grow up in every area to the measure of Christ’s growth, who is our Head, even Christ] From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love [Dependent on Christ, the whole Body – its various parts firmly adhering to one another – grows by the aid of every contributory ligament, with power proportioned to the need of each individual part, so as to build itself up in a spirit of love – or – by contact of every part with the source of its life, derives its power to grow, in proportion to the vigor of each individual part; and so is being built up in a spirit of love]. – (Ephesians 4:1-16 – Words in parenthesis taken from the 26 Translations)*

Exactly what is this passage teaching? Even though I have been accused of being redundant at times, I would like to repeat once more that the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is writing to the Church here in Ephesians 4.

Paul is urging that every believer in Christ Jesus live a life worthy of what they are called to be – in humility, surrendering to God’s control [the true meaning of “meekness”] having patience – diligently seeking for unity of the Spirit by pledging themselves in keeping peace.

Why? Because we are all a part of One Body, the Body of Christ – the Church – and One Spirit, the Holy Spirit! – just as there was one hope set before each of us when we received our “*Call*.” After all, there is but One God and Father of us all, who rules over all beings, works through all things and dwells in all believers.

Every one of us, however, has been entrusted with some charge, a “*gift*” of God’s grace that is measured out in proper portions each in accordance with the extent of the “*gift*” of Christ.

That is why He said when He ascended up to Heaven, as He led those who were held captive in Paradise up to Heaven [The Old Testament saints could not enter into Heaven until their sins had been paid for by Christ’s death. They were held in Paradise then, after they had been ransomed by Christ’s death they were led by Christ to Heaven] “*I give gifts to those of the Church.*”

What gifts did Christ give to the Church, His present Body on earth?

He gave the Ministry Gift:

1. “*some to be apostles*”
2. “*some to be prophets*”
3. “*some to be evangelist*”
4. “*some to be pastors.*” and
5. “*some to be teachers.*”

For what purpose did Christ give these gifts to the Church?

Christ gave these five-fold Minister Gifts for the maturity and the strengthening of the Body of Christ – (the Church) – to equip and prepare God’s people for the works of service they were commanded to do! This growth will continue *until* we all finally attain the unity that comes by faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God, when we reach the fully developed spiritual man measuring to the perfection of Jesus Christ.

Why should we want to grow up?

We cannot stay babies in Christ, we need to mature so that we do not resemble mariners who are tossed on the waves and driven by the storm of every windy thing that is taught by trickery and the craftiness of men who are just waiting with their deceitful doctrines. But let your life lovingly follow truth in a spirit of love – and grow up in all the areas of your life to the measure of Christ’s perfection, who is our Head.

We are the Body of Christ and are dependent upon Him for life and, just as members of a physical body is closely fitted and firmly adhered to each part of the body and each member of the body working properly to produce bodily growth and strengthens itself, we ought to do the same – in love.

We are all spiritual equals in the Body of Christ. No one is any better than anyone else in the eyes of God. There are no “*second-class*” Christians, but rather, any one is as important to God as any other member as they fulfill their function in the Body of Christ – the Church.

While God does endow different Christians with these five-fold assorted Ministry Gift, – (every believer has one or more of these Ministry Gifts) – we must keep in mind, if we are to hold a balance and proper understanding of God’s Word, that *every* Christian should carry out all of these various ministries mentioned here in Ephesians 4:11. Each believer will be gifted in one or more, but he is to implement all of them whenever the occasion arises and God directs.

1. **Apostles** – Mark 16:17 teaches, “*These signs shall follow them that believe*” then are listed the miracle signs of the Apostles. This is a promise to *all* believers!
2. **Prophets** – 1 Corinthians 14:1 states, “*Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts but rather that ye may prophecy*. Verse 5 states, “*I would that ye all ...prophesied*.”
3. **Evangelists** – 2 Timothy 4:5 teaches, “*But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*”
4. **Pastors** – Colossians 3:12 teaches, “*Therefore as God’s people, consecrated and dear to Him, clothe yourselves with tender affections of compassion, humble in mind gentleness and forbearance.*” Here certainly the description of a “*pastor’s*” role – given to every believer! And, Galatians 6:2 states, “*Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*”
5. **Teachers** – Matthew 28:19-20 teaches, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”

These Scriptures are given to every Christian as instructions from God on our privileges and responsibilities. The point is that, while every Christian is commanded to carry out what is possible in all of these areas, any time and anywhere opportunity arises – God promises to empower the believer as “apostle,” “prophet,” “evangelist,” “pastor,” or “teacher,” – however every believer has been endowed by God especially in one, or more, of these Five-fold Ministry Gifts.

For instance, *every* Christian in a very real sense is to be a messenger of the Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 8:4; Ephesians 4:12 & 16; and 6:15; Philippians 2:15-16), however, in addition to the command for every believer, God has endowed some certain believers with the Ministry Gift of “*evangelist*” – who are specifically constituted with special ability to share the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ with others in such convincing manner that many unconverted come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Ephesians 4 teaches that God has given them “*grace*” “*according to the measure of the gift of Christ*” (verse 7).

In other words, we all – every born-again believer – is to “*do the work of the evangelist,*” yet God has endowed “*some*” with special knack, or ability, of the Ministry Gift of Evangelist with a tremendous burden for the lost, thoroughly enjoys the life of a soul-winner.

And, this is true of every one of the Five-fold Ministry Gifts. There are those gifted with the Ministry Gift of Apostle – yet, we are all to believe God for supernatural results (Mark 16:17); there are those gifted with the Ministry Gift of Prophet, yet, “*all may prophecy*” (1

Corinthians 14:1 & 5); there are those gifted with the Ministry Gift of Evangelist [referred too above] ; there are those gifted with the Ministry Gift of Pastor, yet is it not true that all believers should have a “*shepherds heart*” for their brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus? (Colossians 3:12 & Galatians 6:2); there are those who are gifted with the Ministry Gift of Teacher, yet, isn’t it true that all believers should be able to teach? (Matthew 28:19-20).

How Can I Know My What My Gift Is?

How do I find the gift that I have, how do I identify my gift? The answer is: You discover your spiritual gift in the same manner that you discover natural talents. Let’s say that you are a musician – how did you know that you have the talent of music? Of, if you are athletic, how did you ever discover that you had an unusual physical coordination and were able to do athletic exploits that others could not? How did you find these things out? Well, you discover Ministry Gifts in the same way.

Certain people whom God endows in exercising a certain Ministry Gift attract you. They seem to draw you to them. You are inspired by what you witness in their life. After prayer and seeking God you are motivated to certain Ministry Gifts. You discover you do not have a gift for some Ministry Gifts, however, with others your inner spirit senses that this is something you have God-given ability for – your “*spirit*” feels comfortable with. It seems easy for you to become accustomed with certain Ministry Gifts – you spiritually find your Christian walk easily adapts to a certain Ministry Gift – or Gifts. There are certain Ministry Gifts that you receive spiritual gratification from. This can be a possible indication that God is equipping you in that area. Those Ministry Gifts that you feel joy and accomplishment with – and you feel it a great privilege that God has allowed you to be used in that area. It brings you spiritual joy, even a feeling of spiritual pleasure, in God allowing you to exercise certain Ministry Gifts.

You sense a continuing desire to exercise a certain Ministry Gift more than another, and you long to find out more about it. You have a deep-seated, spiritual desire to be used in exercising it more frequently.

Another important indication is that if others, you consider spiritually mature recognize a certain Ministry Gift in you, and encourage you to exercise it. If those of mature experience say something like, “*We feel you that have a certain Ministry Gift and want to encourage you to exercise it.*” It is important that others recognize your Ministry Gift/

The Church should be a body at work, not only in its services – but not only there should believers be ministering to one another and building one another up – also out sides it walls to a desperate, needy world all around us.

Jesus gave the five-fold Ministry Gifts – set them in place – for the purpose of equipping believers until His return to earth again! Therefore, until this prophecy is fulfilled, these five ministries are still valid, and Scriptural, and are still intended to function in the Church today, just as it was in the first century Church. Christ’s intent of these five equipping ministries was to accomplish His purpose of enabling believers to grow up “*in ALL aspects into Him.*” If all of this is Scriptural, then the Church will never become all that Jesus required of it until all of these ministries function together. And, if we limit any of these gifts or ministries, we are rejection that aspect of Christ