

Five Ministry Gifts

A New Life of Spirit Led Ministry to Others

Everyone benefits directly from these five gifts for they are given by the Father for the express purpose of building up the whole Body of Christ so that we can be fully equipped to play our part in the Rescue. Considering how important they are in God's plan, it should not be too surprising that the enemy has tried to eliminate or decimate them. Several of these ministry gifts have nearly passed out of everyday experience for many in the church. The good news is that they are all staging a comeback!

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13 ESV

Centuries of Neglect

Looking at church history through the lens of the above passage from Ephesians, it's fair to say that for centuries, perhaps as many as 18, the primary office of leadership in the church has been that of pastor. Whether Protestant or Catholic, Orthodox or Independent, the pastor, minister, preacher or priest is the focal point for the local congregation's experience of leadership in the church. True enough there may be bishops or superintendents above the local pastor and elders alongside, but where are the other offices? Paul is unambiguous that in the church there are meant to be "apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers" as well as pastors. What happened?



The legalization and expansion of the early church in the fourth century of the Roman Empire "watered down" the depth of experience for most Christians from the time of Constantine the Great onwards. As persecution no longer drove the church underground and deeper into Christ, being a Christian became socially acceptable, even preferable. Genuine conversions were no longer the expected norm (being replaced by infant baptism) and the gifts of the Spirit largely disappeared. At the same time the administrative structure of the church increasingly mirrored that of the Empire with its leaders holding "offices" of administrative power. This process actually had begun just over a century earlier as bishops won out over the charismatically gifted for leadership over the church.

These developments were probably necessary for establishing stable order within the church—there was so much naiveté and credulity in those days. However, two of the biggest "losers" during this season of growth and transformation were the [Baptism in the Holy Spirit](#) and the



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[Gifts of the Spirit](#). Perhaps this was inevitable. It may have been by the Lord's doing that these aspects of His power had to await a time when the church as a whole would be in a better position to handle them. What's clear is that they were never intended to disappear entirely or stay submerged indefinitely. Throughout history the miraculous continued to dazzle here and there like jewels in a river bed. Then, in the last century a stunning resurrection has brought these lost treasures to the surface!

A Century of Renewal

Just as the Catholic Middle Ages proved to be a period of incubation for those ideas which burst forth in the Reformation, so, too, the Pentecostal and Charismatic moments of the twentieth century owed their emergence to the prayer and piety which grew in the intervening centuries of Protestant Orthodoxy. People were hungering for a deeper, more authentic experience of both the passion and power of the Early Church. Where the Protestant Reformation focused on the Person of [Jesus](#) and His saving work, Pentecostalism turned its sights towards the Person of the [Holy Spirit](#) and His supernatural gifts.

This combination was explosive: the Welch Revival and that of Azusa Street quickly brought the baptism in the Spirit and His supernatural workings to millions worldwide. Revivals and outpourings have continued to break forth, as have the baptism in the Spirit and its controversial sign—speaking in tongues. Despite opposition from mainline Christianity, the movement has spread, becoming the fastest growing and third largest branch of Christianity.

In addition, there have been revivals led by extraordinarily gifted healers, prophets with Biblical levels of supernatural vision and accuracy, teachers who have gained universal recognition for their gifts, and evangelists who have reached millions even in single events. Miracles of healing and demonic deliverance have become “the children’s bread” once again in the life of many churches, especially those in the Third World. Once birthed these gifts and callings have continued to grow in depth of understanding and breadth of expansion. There has been no turning back! In one wave after another it is evident that a Mighty Hand has been restoring gifts to His Bride which were never intended to languish unopened.

The Body of Christ in the twenty first century is, therefore, entering a restored season of all the elements of supernatural giftedness that the Early Church once enjoyed. No doubt many things are still in a process of growth towards full restoration, but the main pieces are on the drawing room table. Now is the time for seeing how they will fit together in preparation for the extensive growth that will very likely come as a result. Sadly, some will miss out, blinded by doctrines that keep them from seeing what the Lord is doing in our day. That needn't be you!

The Fivefold Ministry

The entry point for all of us into this dimension of Christian living is the baptism in the Spirit. With it come praying in tongues and access to at least some of the nine supernatural gifts. The fivefold ministry is there (when it is there) to help all believers cultivate their gifts and find their place in the Body as fellow ministers, but it is especially needed by those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Why? Why isn't the traditional pattern of the pastor/teacher sufficient?

Pastors are usually perfectly able to equip believers to serve on the governing board, to teach in Sunday school, to be ushers, or lead home groups, visit the sick at hospital, or canvass the neighborhood in outreach and evangelism. That's a lot. But you don't have to be baptized in the Spirit or supernaturally gifted to do any of it! And neither does the pastor. In the spiritual life it is practically impossible to lead or cultivate others beyond your own level of experience. In the Biblical pattern all of the fivefold ministers were already baptized in the Spirit and operating in their gifts as part of a team. This positioned them powerfully for "equipping" others to join in the effort of a supernaturally gifted Body to do the kinds of ministry which only Holy Spirit empowered Christians can do. Look where Paul places the priority in leadership: apostles first, then prophets. Pastors are not even mentioned.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:27-28 ESV

Without question, the New Testament apostles were Holy Spirit baptized and equipped for supernatural ministry. So were the prophets. So were many, if not all, of the others in leadership positions, judging by the above list which includes supernatural gifts. Furthermore, the apostles were frequently tasked with rounding up the believers that hadn't yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit and laying hands on them until they were. It would appear that the Early Church was so universally charismatic that those who weren't stood out as exceptions to be further instructed. Just as the members of the Early Church could look with confidence to their leaders, recognizing the gifts of those the Lord had placed over them, so we need to understand these gifts for the sake of our own equipping. Seeing the "head" will help us find our place in the Body.

1) Apostles

After Jesus' resurrection the twelve disciples He had chosen became the principal "apostles" and the uncontested leaders of the Early Church. Paul's apostolic position was later recognized by these men, but was contested by others who sought to gain influence over churches he had established. Others were added to the ranks of the apostles, though the number of "false apostles" evidently increased as well. Additionally, the Early Church recognized a distinction between apostles who held universal authority in the church and elders who functioned as local administrators or as advisers to the apostles. We should expect it then that as this office is restored to the church controversy will likely surround it. How to recognize true apostles?

The first apostles knew the Lord personally and well. They had learned directly from Him and had seen Him resurrected in power. Their faith and their knowledge of God was, therefore, both intimate and authoritative for others who wanted to be taught by them. This will be one of the marks. Another is the way they shepherded the growth and missionary spread of the Early Church. They had a genuine vision for the harvest of souls and church planting. A third indicator was their ability to move in supernatural power. Paul said he demonstrated all of the signs of a true apostle. Perhaps, the greatest mark of a true apostle, however, will be the way the other four offices recognize their God-given authority and submit their ministries to apostolic oversight.



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2) Prophets

Prophets abound in both Testaments of the Bible. The unmistakable mark of a true prophet is Holy Spirit given insight and foresight. They are able to see things that others don't or can't. They can foretell future events through dreams or visions they receive from the Lord (foresight). They can also "read" the innermost secrets of a person through whatever unique way the Lord chooses to work through them (insight). In addition to foretelling, prophets were called to "forth tell"—to speak forth the counsel of God's holy standard against sin, calling the people to repentance.

With the New Covenant there is no less emphasis upon holy living, but a much greater emphasis upon the grace of God to accomplish it. There is a marked difference in temperament between the way Old and New Testament prophets present their messages. Whereas OT prophets seemed to "thunder" at the people from on high, inveighing against them, New Testament prophets encourage and enlighten the people "from below" as loving servants. Consider the difference between Moses at Sinai or Elijah at Mount Carmel and Jesus, who is the greatest of all prophets, giving the Sermon on the Mount. Give special respect to those prophets who not only have supernatural gifts from the Holy Spirit, but show forth the nature of Jesus in the way they minister to others.

3) Evangelists

Even under the Old Covenant it was expected that Abraham's offspring would carry the "good news" about their God to the outside world. This happened to a limited degree during the Jewish Diaspora as "God-fearers" were attracted to the Synagogues which sprang up throughout the Mediterranean basin. The Early Church carried this to a whole new level with a brand-new message. Both Stephen, the first martyr, and Philip displayed awesome gifts of evangelism. Soon, practically everyone everywhere was hearing the message. Nowadays, we are all familiar with this gift, especially after the explosion of converts taking place through the ministries of men like Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke. Nevertheless, evangelists aren't always on platforms or in the mission field. Look for them in the local church, too.

4) Pastors

Pastors are shepherds of the flock. This is the office most familiar to all of us, so there is little need to delineate it here. It is modeled quite naturally on Jesus as our ultimate Good Shepherd who (in the gospels) cared for and cultivated the faith of lost individuals, the inner circle of devout followers and the wider gatherings of interested, though somewhat less committed believers. Typically, pastors are the head of the local church and as such, everyone needs to submit to their authority, even those who might consider that they have a higher gift and calling. Being the head pastor, however, doesn't mean that pastoring is their gift, only their position with its common title. Many pastors are actually evangelists or teachers with little God-given ability to do actual pastoring. That's not their fault—it may be ours for expecting them to be all things for all people, when the Lord told us in advance that He gives out *five* different kinds of leadership gifts for "equipping" us.



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5) Teachers

For centuries the academic model dominated this gift. The great Luther was himself a seminary professor, though there was certainly nothing stale or pedantic about his preaching. Nevertheless, with their renewed emphasis upon the Word of God, many Protestant churches sometimes seemed designed to resemble lecture halls with sermons given like a scholarly address. This approach has perhaps had the unfortunate effect of cultivating "head knowledge" at the expense of practical experience and personal transformation. In the closing decades of the last century a new kind of teacher emerged out of the charismatic movement. These are being recognized across denominational lines for the power of their gift to open the scriptures in such a way that "our hearts burned with us" once again.

You may not find a church with all five of these offices filled. That's not the main thing you need, so don't let it disturb you. The main thing is seeking to be faithful to what Jesus would have you do. Let Him place you where He wills and lead you as He desires. In any healthy church you will certainly find leaders who will gladly help you get started ministering with the gifts they discern in you.

More to Explore

7 Motivational Gifts These should be of particular interest to everyone, since each of us has been given at least one. Oddly enough, it's not always obvious to us what our unique gift is. Perhaps the Lord enjoys playing Hide and Seek more than we might imagine! Here's a clue: usually you will find them "hidden in plain sight," since people often live out of their gift before they catch on to what it is. Intrigued? See if you can spot your own.

9 Manifestation Gifts Jesus never intended for His church to be powerless or penniless. Just as the tithe is the Lord's provision for material supply, so the baptism in the Spirit is His provision for supernatural supply. Neither is forced on anyone, but when believers come into obedience, watch out! The "windows of heaven" open wide! Through the baptism in the Spirit, Jesus pours out gifts that will manifest as signs and wonders for the sake of ministry to someone He wants to bless.

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Scriptures on the Ministry Gifts

Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:8-16 ESV

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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