

Revolution Of Ordinaries

Helping the “Unschooled & Ordinary”
Make Disciples

Discover Your Spiritual Gift

What does the Bible say about how God gifts His people?

Here are the verses in the New Testament that list the gifts:

- Romans 12:3-8
 - Prophecy
 - Serving
 - Teaching
 - Encouragement
 - Giving
 - Leading
 - Showing mercy
- 1 Corinthians 12:7-11
 - Wisdom
 - Knowledge
 - Faith
 - Healing
 - Miraculous powers
 - Distinguishing between spirits
 - Speaking in tongues
 - Interpreting tongues
- Ephesians 4:11-16
 - Apostles
 - Prophets
 - Evangelists
 - Pastors
 - Teachers

We are going to focus on Ephesians 4:11-16 and how to determine which of the gifts listed there have been given to you by God through the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

This list is often called APEST (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers) or the Fivefold ministry.

Defining the gifts:

See if any of these definitions resonate with your heart and where you feel most at home.

Apostle: This word literally means a “sent one” and is typically someone who is out ahead of the congregation. They are looking at the mission field, trying to find ways to engage the community and the surrounding area. They won’t smell as much like sheep as the shepherd because they are always on the lookout for the next field of operation.

Prophet: This person is interested in what God is saying more than what people are saying. They are naturally attuned to listen for the voice of God. They may have strong intuition and connection with God in a way that they have always felt a bit different. They not only hear from God but speak for God when God makes His message clear. The prophet can spot the problems and will offer questions and critique from time to time without being a resister of people.

Evangelist: This person works easily and naturally with others, especially strangers and new people. They have a natural draw to be around people and are usually personable, even magnetic. Having a conversation with a new person is energizing, not draining or anxiety producing. They are able to bring down people’s defenses and get right to the point about the good news of Jesus with people.

Shepherd: The shepherd is present in the midst of the sheep. This person has a deep care for people and does soul work with those in their circle. The shepherd is always on the lookout to make sure people aren’t out there alone and very naturally draws people back into the fold. They know how to make people feel like they belong. These are safe people to be around. They have a gentle spirit when it comes to the family of God.

Teacher: The teacher has the gift of study and communicating the truths of God’s Word to others. They are in the Word on a regular basis. No one has to convince them to read the Bible and books about the Bible. Because of their dedication to study they are a wealth of knowledge and a valuable resource to the congregation. They are key to helping existing disciples mature in their knowledge as well as incoming new people.

How to Identify your gift:

Most people have at least one of these gifts that stands out above the rest. There will be a small group of people who have two. There are a few things you can do to determine which of these gifts best suits you and how the Holy Spirit has gifted you.

1 – Pray and ask God to make it clear which of these gifts best suits you. Ask God to give you James 1:5 wisdom to make this clear. Commit to God that before it is clear you will be faithful in the opportunities that present to be of service to the kingdom and after the gift you will continue to be faithful in participating in kingdom building activities (God doesn’t just want us to know our gift but to use it and God doesn’t just want us to exclude everything outside our giftedness. Gifts are not an excuse for inaction).

2 – Read and re-read Ephesians 4:11-16 and the above explanations. See if one of them resonates and draws you more than the rest.

3 – Ask people around you which of these gifts best describes what they see in you. This affirmation can be confirmation of what you believe God is showing you about your gift.

4 – Move ahead in faithfulness. If you want God to show you something, it helps to already be participating in what God is putting in front of you. Don't put action on hold waiting for an answer.

Why this is important:

This is important because of what Paul says is the purpose of the gifts when they are all working together in a congregation. These gifts are given for specific purposes all explained in Ephesians 4:11-16: to equip the church for service, to build up the church, to help us reach maturity and the whole measure of Christ, to keep us out of false teaching, and to help us grow.

These are all very important outcomes. It is essential that churches understand these gifts, identify and utilize the gifts and then work together out of our strengths.

How the gifts work together for making disciples:

The amazing thing about the church is that God doesn't give one person all the gifts. For the church to function in a healthy way we have to rely on each other. We all need each other. The gifts compliment each other. If you have all teachers and no shepherds you will have knowledgeable people who aren't being nurtured. If you have all shepherds and no evangelists you will have strong fellowship and connection but little kingdom impact in the community.

Imagine a church where the evangelistically geared people are working with the apostolically minded to strategize about how to reach the community. They start bringing in new people to a church that has strong teachers and shepherds so that the new people get solid teaching to grow to maturity and a solid connection and nurturing care from the shepherds. These new people see and experience the very real voice and guidance of God through the example of the prophetically gifted. When things work like this – the whole body grows and the impact of the church is amplified!

Every Disciple a Disciple Maker:

When you view evangelism and discipleship through this combination of gifts you can see very quickly that everyone can have a role in reaching someone who is seeking God. We often think of outreach is that everyone has to be on the frontline. The reality is someone has to welcome these new people and those on the front lines cannot and will not be good at everything. Evangelism is a whole church body exercise when viewed through this framework!

Disclaimer – There can be a temptation to avoid things that we aren't good at. You might hear someone say "I can't do that because that is just not my gift!" Well, sometimes God calls us to do things we stink at. We need to be faithful to what God is asking of us or telling us even if we aren't the best at it.

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