

Connect360: The Living Church

November 19, 2024

- *Lesson 8 in the Connect360 unit “The Immeasurable Love of Christ” focuses on Ephesians 4:11-16.*

Paul didn’t simply offer good moral advice with a spiritual flavor. He intended to root Jesus’ behavior into our Christian identity, and he knew the best tool given to us by God to make that happen was Christ’s church.

The church is not just a random group of people who show up at the same place to sing the same songs and study from the same holy book. Rather, we collectively are called out by God to accomplish his work according to his gospel.

God expects us to work together and to grow together so we, as individuals, will become more like Jesus, and the church will reflect the love, light and grace God wants to show to the world. God didn’t leave us on our own to figure this out. God gave us his Holy Spirit to guide us, and he gave us spiritual gifts to help us minister to each other.

Verse 11 lists four specific leadership gifts given by Christ to build the church and equip its members. This is only a partial list—more are listed in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. The gifts, known as spiritual gifts, enable members to serve the church with effectiveness and skill. The four gifts listed here are given so the church may grow in fellowship, service, encouragement and maturity.

Originally, apostles were eyewitnesses to Jesus and his ministry, and they knew the resurrected Jesus personally. But while the office of apostle was destined to change, the spiritual gift remains. It resides among missionaries and church planters, people who have a deep desire to take

the gospel to those who have not heard it.

Prophets are gifted by the Holy Spirit to preach and proclaim the gospel. This is primarily a gift of proclamation, not prediction. People with the gift of prophecy take what God has given to them and reveal it to God's people. They have a passion for speaking God's truth and are often church planters. Evangelists are specifically gifted for communicating the gospel in relevant, compelling terms to people who are not Christians.

Pastor and teacher as used here are usually combined to represent different aspects of the same gift. The word "pastor" means to shepherd and protect, and describes someone who leads and cares for the church. "Teacher" means to shepherd and teach, interpreting God's word to his church.

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