

Why pastors and staff members?

Ephesians 4:11-12 (HCSB)

And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ

Theme: the training of the saints

Point: leaders are given Scripture to deliver so that by this every saint in the body can grow, function, and be trained for mission.

FCF: spectatorial (watch the pastors do it) or myopic (I have to be a pastor to do anything)

App: get trained, do work!

A recent study by Pew Forum

The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public – and a third of adults under 30 – are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.¹

“Spiritual but not religious” is a rallying cry often meaning *no creeds, authority, or leadership*.²

But are these bad?

The NT presents these as crucial to our growth (23 verses) (footnotes)

Prophet (OT) - gave new revelation of Christ and God’s redemptive plan

The office/function of the Prophet is not to be confused with the *gift* of prophesy...

- NT gift of prophesy comes on a person when the Holy Spirit brings something to their mind spontaneously for the edification of the church.³
- A Prophet has “authority to speak and write words which were ‘words of God’ in an absolute sense”⁴
 - We can call the Apostles/Prophets “**authoritative**” and the prophetic gift as “**edifying**”.⁵
 - Today’s prophetic utterance is authoritative to the degree that it measures up with Scripture.⁶

Apostle (What is an Apostle?)

Commissioned by Christ as a special representatives

Galatians 1:1 (HCSB)

Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead.

Authoritative as from God Himself⁷

¹ The Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life. “Nones” On The Rise. Oct 9, 2012. <http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx>

² Ibid. Pew Research surveys find no change in the percentage of Americans who say that prayer is an important part of their daily life; it is 76% in 2012, the same as it was 25 years ago, in 1987. <http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx>

³ I adapted this from Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology*. Vol.1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) 1056

⁴ Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology*. Vol.1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) 905-606.

⁵ 1 Cor. 14:3 “But the person who prophesies speaks to people for edification, encouragement, and consolation” (HCSB). There seems to be a clear distinction between the prophesy of the Prophets given to write Scripture, and the prophetic utterance given to believers for edification in the church. I’m taking this specifically from 1 Corinthians 14:26-32 where Paul teaches believers who are clearly not Apostles like him (v37) how to prophesy.

⁶ 1 Thess. 5:20-21 “Don’t despise prophecies, but test all things. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil” (HCSB). See also 1 Cor. 14:37

⁷ Who were the Apostles? The Twelve, Paul, Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Apollos (1 Corinthians 4:6-7), Silvanus (1 Thess. 2:6-7). Probably not Timothy or Titus, as they did not fit the qualifications outlined above, nor was that their intended purpose. They were elders.

- There is overlap between Apostle/Prophet with divine revelation...but different emphasis
 - The Prophet divinely communicated revelation
 - The Apostle was divinely commissioned to start and establish churches by the authoritative proclamation of these revelations⁸

1 Corinthians 14:37

If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, he should recognize that what I write to you is the Lord's command. But if anyone ignores this, he will be ignored.

Unique to the 1st century⁹

revealed by their qualifications

1. encountered Jesus' after his resurrection with His own eyes

Acts 1:21¹⁰

Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning from the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of His resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one abnormally born, He also appeared to me.

Do we need Apostles today? (or prophets)

First, we must ask what their purpose was...

Ephesians 2:19-20 (HCSB)

So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

Purpose: to lay the foundation of the Church

through word/power of their witness...

Ephesians 3:5

This was not made known to people in other generations as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:9-11

For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building. According to God's grace that was given to me, I have laid a foundation as a skilled master builder, and another builds on it. But each one must be careful how he builds on it. For no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ.

<-- Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation, and he has been revealed to us by His Apostles and Prophets

hence...

⁸ Harold W. Hoehner writes that the Apostle carried "the divine commission to a specific task of proclaiming authoritatively the message in oral and written form and of the establishing and the building up of churches." *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 2002) 542.

⁹ Not to mention unique in function, not just timeframe. See Rev. 21:14

¹⁰ See also 1 Cor. 9:1, Heb. 2:3-4

Hebrews 12:1

Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.

The foundation for revealing Christ has already been set!¹¹

But are people still commissioned as apostles in other ways? (lower-case “a”) *proxy*

It’s often said: ἀπόστολος comes from the root word meaning “one sent”¹²

There seems to be a NT difference between...

- Apostles (authoritative/foundational) = doing foundational work
- apostles (messengers) doing frontier work, church-planting, starting things, etc.

So can we call these “apostles”?

Sure...but would that not be...

- Presumptuous?
 - no major leader in church history called themselves “apostles,” not Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Whitefield, etc.
 - But we’re going to give that title to a church-planter?
- Confusing?
 - it deadens it’s original, extraordinary intent
 - it would cast a shadow on the sufficiency of Scripture.

Apostles never appointed apostles, but elders (Acts 14:3, Titus 1:5)¹³ Why?

Elders, pastors, teachers must teach the message the Apostles were given¹⁴

Titus 1:3 (HCSB)

In His own time He has revealed His message in the proclamation that I was entrusted with by the command of God our Savior

Philippians 2:16 (HCSB)

Hold firmly to the message of life

¹¹ Some read Eph. 4:11 as a mandate for “the five-fold” ministry, a continuation of all these functions to exist as *offices* in the church. But the continuation of Apostleship cannot be determined on this verse alone, for all it really says is that Christ “gave” (aorist tense). We must consider other verses that speak more clearly to the issue. And we see that in all the canon of Scripture, Apostleship is not continued after Paul, except in the written Word of God.

¹² Etymology is not always the most accurate way of determining a word’s meaning, since word meanings can change over time (e.g., *butterfly*). Carson treats this in-depth, “One of the most enduring of errors, the root fallacy presupposes that every word actually *has* a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In his view, meaning is determined by etymology; that is, by the root or roots of a word. How many times have we been told that because the verbal cognate of ἀπόστολος (apostolos, apostle) is ἀπόστέλλω (apostello, I send), the root meaning of ‘apostle’ is ‘one who is sent’? ...this is linguistic nonsense.” D.A. Carson. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 1996) 28.

¹³ Norman Geisler. *Systematic Theology*. Vol.4. (Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House, 2005). 725.

¹⁴ often called “the message” or “the faith”, or simply “the word”

2 Thessalonians 2:15 (HCSB)

Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, either by our message or by our letter.

1 Corinthians 15:2 (NIV)

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

1 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) stay the course

“I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.”

Jude 3 (HCSB)

“to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all”

2 Timothy 4:2 (HCSB)

Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths

2 Timothy 2:2 (HCSB) teach others

what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also

we spent lots of time on ‘Apostle’ so that you can see...

The glory was never in the person or function, but in **the message they carried**

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (HCSB) to persuade you of the power of the message preached - you don't need an Apostle in your living room, you need the voice of God

This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the message of God, which also works effectively in you believers.

Message: the Gospel of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit as laid out in the redemptive story of the Scriptures

Synopsis: you have to exegetical origami with the Scriptures to make them say that there is a continuing line of Apostles/Prophets to give us secret revelation.

gnosticism!

2 John 8-9 (HCSB)

Watch yourselves so you don't lose what we have worked for, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who does not remain in Christ's teaching but goes beyond it, does not have God. The one who remains in that teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son.

Problem: we do not really consider the Word as sufficient. 9% of US adults have a biblical WV¹⁵
The problem is not a drought of fresh revelation, the problem is that we are Biblically illiterate.

Either...

¹⁵ Only 19% of born again Christians. Barna Group. March 6, 2009. <http://www.barna.org/transformation-articles/252-barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years?q=worldview>

Not knowledgeable of Scripture
Not confident in Scripture
Not saved to understand Scripture

Spiritual maturity comes from knowing and living the Word of God in community.

Hebrews 5:11-6:1a

We have a great deal to say about this, and it's difficult to explain, since you have become too lazy to understand. Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God's revelation again. You need milk, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil. Therefore, leaving the elementary message about the Messiah, let us go on to maturity.

THIS TRAINING IS WHY THE FOLLOWING THREE EXIST...

Evangelist - proclaims the message of Christ

Making new converts, and preaching the Gospel to old converts!
A constant gospel stream.

Teacher - explains the message of Christ

Comm group leaders, youth workers, children's ministers/volunteers, parents, mentors, friends.

Pastor - leads us in the message of Christ

by shepherding and nourishment according to the Word

Titus 1:7-9

For an overseer...must be...holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it

Common misconceptions from this list of five

1. Only pastors do ministry, while the rest of us watch (spectatorial)
2. I gotta be a pastor to do anything worthwhile (myopic)

Wait! Paul introduces a sixth... **The Saints!**

What is a saint?

1 Corinthians 1:2

To God's church at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours.¹⁶

Saint: anyone who puts their faith in Christ! Saints exist by grace.

This verse is not about the fearsome five.

They are a means to an end.

The saints are the point!

POINT: TO TRAIN SAINTS TO DO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY!

Worshiping by (L)earning, (G)iving, (S)erving, and being on (M)ission in (C)ommunity

What are the opportunities to be trained?

¹⁶ see also Eph. 2:19

Coming together to learn...

- Sunday gatherings (L/C/G)
- Men's accountability (L/C)
- Titus 2 (L/C)
- Women's studies (L)
- EQUIP (L/C)
- Interns (L/S)
- Comm groups (L/C)
- Counseling/mentoring (L/C)
- Pre-marital counseling (L/C)
- Camps/events (L/C/G)

Training to make disciples and be on mission...

- Coaching (L)
- Missions (S/M/G)
- Perspectives (L/M)
- EWI (L/M)
- Renew (L/M)
- Sending team (M/S)
- Church plants (M/C/G)
- Prayer tours (M/C)

Serving together...

- Servants on Sunday (S/C)
- Campus involvement (M/C/G)
- Team leads on Sunday (S/C)
- Interns (L/S)
- Youth leadership (C/S)
- Worship team (C/S)
- Prayer meetings (S/C)

Church is not for passive entertainment. It is for training and edification.

This isn't to fill up space or go through the motions. It's not to entertain.

It's for the building up the body for radical mission and intense worship of a God
whose kingdom is coming in Christ.

This building occurs when we...

- know what we believe and why we believe it (theology)
- know Who we believe and follow Him (worship)

Taking what we know about God, and seeking conformity in every area of our lives.

This is what it means to be filled with all the fullness of God!

Are you living a so-called Christian life, but feel dry, without a sense of purpose?

I invite you to take the historic call to the Christian faith seriously, and see if that changes anything.

You can go through your entire Christian life letting it all pass you by.

Or you can jump into the swell of God's glorious reign.