

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Bud Wilkinson was a legendary coach of the Oklahoma Sooners from 1947 to 1963 when they were a football powerhouse. During his career he won 3 national championships and 14 conference championships. In one stretch his team won a record 47 straight games. Wilkinson led Oklahoma to a record of 145-29-4.

Following a game, a young reporter asked, "Coach, how has the game of football contributed to the health and fitness of America?" To the reporter's shock, Wilkinson responded, "It has not contributed at all!" "What do you mean?" stammered the reporter. Wilkinson said, "I define football as 22 men on the field, desperately needing rest, and 22,000 fans in the stadium, desperately needing exercise!"

In Ephesians 4:11-13 the apostle Paul gives us a sound biblical philosophy of ministry for the local church. He is saying, "Those with leadership gifts are to equip the saints for the work of service, so that the body will grow to unity, maturity, and Christ-likeness."

Paul lists five specific roles of leaders God has called to lead His Church. Below you will find those five and a brief description of the original words used. Read through them and then discuss the questions that follow.

Apostles: Greek word *apostolos* (also translated *Messenger in the Bible*)
Meaning...*a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders*

Prophets: Greek word *prophētēs*
Meaning...*one who speaks out*

a) in Greek writings, an interpreter of oracles or of other hidden things
b) one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, especially concerning future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation

Evangelists: Greek word *euaggelistēs*
Meaning... *a bringer of good tidings*

Pastors: Greek word *poimēn* (also translated *Shepherd in the Bible*)
Meaning... *to protect, a herdsman, a shepherd*
(The presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church)

A shepherd in the Near East was responsible for watching out for enemies trying to attack the sheep, defending the sheep from attackers, healing the wounded and sick sheep, finding and saving lost or trapped sheep, loving them, and sharing their lives and to earn their trust.

Teachers: Greek word *didaskalos* (also translated *Master in the Bible*)
Meaning... *one who teaches concerning the things of God and duties of man.*

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think God set up the Church to operate in the manner He did, that of calling leaders to build up, equip and mobilize the Church for ministry?
2. What can we learn from the fact that He calls leaders of the Church to different roles? What does that teach each of us?
3. Do you think there is a danger in the Church of letting just a few people "do" the ministry?
4. How can we (you) ensure that the goal of leadership remains to equip the body for service?

Ultimately God is the one who equips. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, "Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." May we submit to His leadership.