

## **Unity and Maturity**

### **Ephesians 4:7-16**

It is the ascended Christ who gives gifts to the church. He fills all things with his presence.

#### **Ascension Gifts (8-11)**

- Gifts are not given to people—the people themselves are Christ’s gifts
- We need to identify and recognise the ascension gifts among us
- They are given after the ascension. This means more than the 12 apostles. Others included Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus etc (Acts 14:4; 1 Cor 15:8; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; 1Thess 1:1; 2:6; 2 Thess 1:1)
- The existence of ‘false apostles’ presupposes that there were other genuine ones (2 Cor 10:1ff)

#### **1/Apostles (11)**

- ‘Sent ones; messengers’
- Eg Jesus (Hebrews 3:1); Paul; James
- Foundational
- Church planting and church building
- Act 2:42; 13:1-52; 15:36-41; 2 Cor 11:28; Gal 1:19; Eph 2:20

#### **2/Prophets (11)**

- ‘Proclaimers’
- Eg Jesus (Matt 24:4-51); Agabus
- Motivational
- Revealing the word and will of God
- Act 11:27-30; 21:11; 15:32; 1 Cor 14:3, 24, 25, 29-32

#### **3/Evangelists (11)**

- ‘Announcers of good news’
- Eg Jesus (Luke 4:18); Philip
- Visionary
- Winning people for Christ
- Act 8:1-40

#### **4/Pastors (11)**

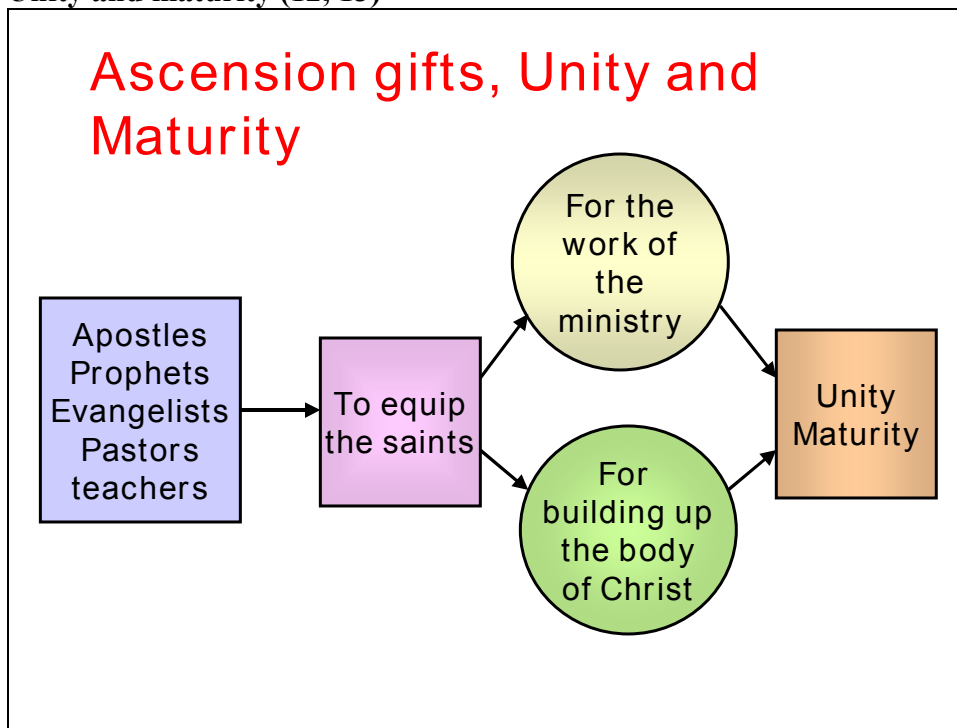
- ‘Shepherds’
- Eg Jesus (John 10:11); Ephesian elders
- Pastoral

- Tending the flock of God
- Act 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4

### 5/Teachers (11)

- ‘Teachers’
- Eg Jesus (42X in gospels); Apollos
- Edifying
- Educating God’s people
- Act 18:24-28; 2 Tim 4:1-5

### Unity and maturity (12, 13)



The ascension gifts produce:

- Ministry to each other
- Building up of the body
- Unity of faith
- Knowledge of the Son of God
- Maturity in Christ

### Problems to address (14)

- Immaturity—we need to grow up
- Instability—we need to stand firm

- Ignorance—we need to know the truth

### **Built up in love (15)**

- Speak the truth in love
- Honesty with charity

### **Growing up in every way (15)**

- Growing in every way = well-balanced
- The head = the one under whom we serve
- Christ is our standard and model

### **A united body (16)**

- The whole body is joined together
- By every joint = everyone is important
- We are all enabled to ‘work properly’
- We are built up in love

### **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

1. Note the word ‘grace’ (7). It means ‘undeserved favour.’ What does this tell us about what our attitude should be towards the gifts and talents we have?
2. Verse eight is a quotation. Where from? (Most Bibles will have a footnote reference on this.)
3. Compare Ephesians 4:8 and the original Old Testament quotation. What difference is there between them? It appears that Paul is quoting from the Greek version of the Old Testament which reads differently from the Hebrew version (‘giving to’ not ‘receiving from’). Read verses 17 and 18 again in this way. What is the message for us here?
4. Think about the list in 4:11. How many contemporary apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers can you name in the world today? Give reasons for your choices.
5. In 1 Corinthians 12:27 to 31, Paul seems to be saying that God has set apostles, prophets, teachers and so on in every local church. What do you think? Why? (Hint: Remember that not every evangelist is a Billy Graham or a Reinhard Bonnke.)
6. According to verse 12, who are the ones who are to do the work of the ministry (ie service)? What are the implications for us?
7. Consider the four goals listed in 13. On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you place yourself? Your church? Why?
8. What is ‘speaking the truth in love’? (15)
9. What is God’s ideal for us? (15)
10. Some people say they are Christians but they ‘don’t go to church.’ What light does verse 16 shed on this idea?
11. What is the greatest challenge you feel this passage offers you? Why?

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