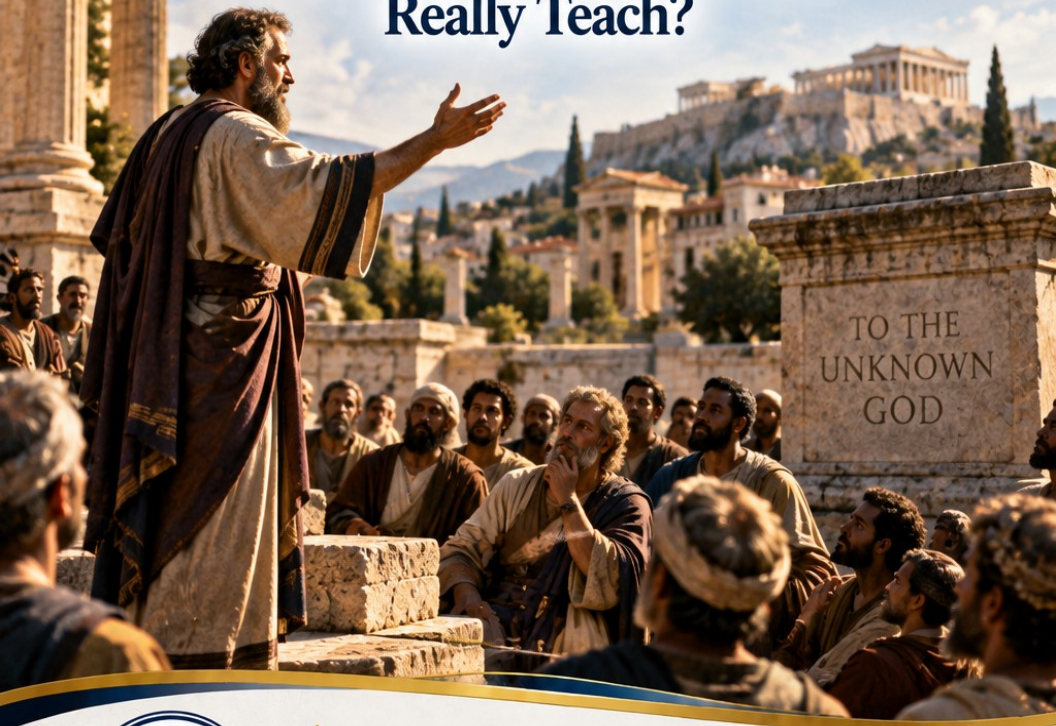
THE RETURN OF THE LATTER RAIN MOVEMENT

BOOKLET EIGHT

THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY

What Does Ephesians 4:11 Really Teach?



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THE RETURN OF THE LATTER RAIN MOVEMENT
THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY

What Does Ephesians 4:11 Really Teach?

Foundational Scriptures: Ephesians 4:1–16; Ephesians 2:19–22; Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–31; Acts 6:1–7; Acts 13:1–3; Acts 20:17–32; 2 Timothy 4:1–5; 1 Peter 5:1–4; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; Jude 3.

Central Truth: Jesus Christ gave ministries to His church for the equipping of believers, the work of ministry, and the building up of His body. Ephesians 4:11 identifies ministries given by Christ, but does not explicitly establish a five-level governmental hierarchy or require every congregation to submit to a restored apostolic structure.

INTRODUCTION — FIVE MINISTRIES OR FIVE LEVELS OF AUTHORITY?

In recent decades, the expression *fivefold ministry* has become increasingly familiar throughout Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity.

It is commonly used to describe the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers mentioned in Ephesians 4:11.

Some Christians use the expression simply to recognize the different ministries that Jesus Christ has given to His church.

Others attach a much more elaborate teaching to the passage.

They believe that God is restoring a fivefold governmental structure, with apostles and prophets occupying foundational positions of authority.

Some teach that a congregation cannot reach its intended maturity unless all five ministries are recognized and functioning.

Others suggest that traditional pastoral leadership is incomplete without the oversight of modern apostles.

Still others describe the fivefold ministry as an essential part of God's preparation of the church for an extraordinary end-time harvest.

These teachings raise important questions.

Does Ephesians 4 actually establish a governmental structure?

Are the five ministries presented as five ranks of authority?

Does every congregation need five distinct ministerial offices?

Must pastors submit to modern apostles in order for the church to mature?

And what does Paul mean when he says these ministries were given for the perfecting of the saints?

We must be careful.

The problem is not the biblical passage.

The problem arises when interpretations are added to the passage that the text itself does not establish.

We should never reject a Scripture because someone has misused it.

Neither should we accept an interpretation merely because it has become popular.

Our responsibility is to examine the Word of God.

The goal of this study is not to diminish genuine ministry.

It is to understand the purpose of the ministries Christ gave to His church and to distinguish that purpose from modern claims of restored governmental authority.

1. THE CONTEXT OF EPHESIANS 4

One of the most common mistakes in Bible interpretation is beginning with a single verse without examining its context.

Ephesians 4:11 is often quoted by itself.

But Paul did not begin the chapter by discussing ministerial titles.

He began by discussing the Christian walk, humility, unity, and the oneness of the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1–3 (KJV)

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Notice what comes first.

Humility.

Meekness.

Longsuffering.

Love.

Unity.

These are not secondary matters.

They establish the spirit in which Christian ministry must operate.

Paul continues:

Ephesians 4:4–6 (KJV)

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

The emphasis is not upon dividing the church into competing levels of spiritual authority.

It is upon the unity of God's people under one Lord.

For Oneness Pentecostals, these verses also affirm the foundational revelation of the one God.

The same Jesus Christ who is the head of the church is the One who gives ministry to His people.

Therefore, any interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 must be consistent with the unity, humility, and mutual responsibility described in the surrounding passage.

A ministry structure that produces spiritual superiority, rivalry, or dependence upon religious personalities contradicts the spirit of the chapter.

2. CHRIST IS THE GIVER OF MINISTRY

Before identifying the ministries, Paul explains their source.

Ephesians 4:7 (KJV)

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

The passage begins with grace.

Ministry is not something a person possesses because of personal greatness.

It is something given by Jesus Christ.

Paul then connects Christ's exaltation with His gifts to the church.

Ephesians 4:8 (KJV)

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

The giver is Jesus Christ.

The church does not manufacture spiritual ministries through organizational titles.

A ministerial certificate may recognize a calling.

A congregation may recognize an individual's qualifications and service.

Experienced ministers may examine and recommend someone for ministry.

But human recognition is not the source of spiritual calling.

Jesus Christ is.

The same principle applies to spiritual gifts.

They are given by God, not manufactured by human authority.

1 Corinthians 12:11 (KJV)

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

The Holy Ghost distributes gifts according to His will.

A minister may pray for someone.

A congregation may lay hands upon an individual in accordance with Scripture.

But no human being controls the Spirit of God.

The church must never confuse recognizing a calling with possessing the power to create that calling.

3. WHAT DOES EPHESIANS 4:11 ACTUALLY SAY?

Let us read the passage.

Ephesians 4:11–12 (KJV)

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

The passage identifies apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

These ministries are gifts from Jesus Christ to His church.

But notice what Paul does not say.

He does not say that these are five levels of spiritual rank.

He does not say that every local congregation must have five separate offices.

He does not say that apostles must govern pastors.

He does not say that prophets must provide binding personal revelation to every believer.

He does not describe a procedure for restoring an apostolic government after centuries of supposed absence.

He identifies ministries and immediately explains their purpose.

That purpose is found in verse 12.

The ministries are given for the equipping of the saints, the work of ministry, and the building up of the body of Christ.

The passage is concerned with the development of the church.

Its emphasis is not upon the exaltation of ministers.

It is upon the strengthening of believers.

4. THE MEANING OF PERFECTING THE SAINTS

The King James Version uses the expression *perfecting of the saints*.

The Greek word translated *perfecting* is *katartismos*.

It carries the idea of equipping, preparing, or bringing something into a condition suitable for its intended purpose.

The point is not that ministers make believers instantly flawless.

The point is that ministry helps prepare God's people for faithful Christian service.

Consider the implications.

A pastor should not simply gather people who depend upon him for every spiritual decision.

He should teach them to understand the Word of God.

A teacher should not merely demonstrate personal knowledge.

He should help believers understand and apply biblical truth.

An evangelist should not simply attract attention to his preaching.

He should proclaim the gospel so that people can respond to Jesus Christ.

All genuine ministry should contribute to the spiritual development of the church.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (KJV)

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Notice the relationship between Scripture and spiritual maturity.

The Word of God equips believers.

Ministers serve that purpose by teaching, preaching, and applying the Scriptures.

They do not replace the Word of God with their personal authority.

The goal of ministry is not to make believers dependent upon ministers, but to equip believers to live faithfully before God.

5. WHO IS SUPPOSED TO DO THE WORK OF MINISTRY?

Ephesians 4:12 is especially important.

Some interpretations of the verse have treated the ministries of verse 11 as the people who perform all the work while the rest of the congregation receives their services.

But the passage can be understood as describing a progression:

Christ gives ministers.

Ministers equip the saints.

The saints participate in the work of ministry.

The body of Christ is built up.

This understanding emphasizes that ministry is not limited to a small group of recognized leaders.

Every believer has a place in the body.

Not everyone is called to preach.

Not everyone is a pastor.

Not everyone possesses the same spiritual gifts.

But every believer can contribute to the life and mission of the church.

- Some pray.
- Some encourage.
- Some teach.
- Some serve those in need.
- Some participate in evangelism.
- Some help maintain the congregation's practical responsibilities.
- Some minister through hospitality, generosity, or acts of mercy.

Paul makes this clear in Romans 12.

Romans 12:4–5 (KJV)

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

The church is not intended to be a passive audience.

It is a living body.

And the purpose of faithful leadership is to help every member fulfill his or her responsibility before God.

6. THE APOSTLES — FOUNDATION AND MISSION

The first ministry listed in Ephesians 4:11 is apostles.

We examined this subject extensively in Booklet Seven.

Here we need only establish its relationship to the broader discussion.

The original apostles of Jesus Christ occupied a unique historical position.

They were commissioned to proclaim the gospel and establish the foundational witness of the church.

Ephesians 2:20 (KJV)

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;"

The apostles' teaching remains authoritative.

Their foundational role cannot simply be transferred to anyone who adopts the same title.

At the same time, the New Testament uses the term *apostle* in more than one context.

Some individuals were sent as messengers or commissioned for missionary work.

Church planting and missionary service continue today.

A minister may faithfully establish congregations and preach the gospel in places where Christ is not known.

That work is valuable.

But it does not automatically establish a right to govern unrelated congregations or issue binding revelation.

The ministry of the church continues upon the apostolic foundation.

It does not require a new foundation.

The New Testament provides several examples of the word apostle being used beyond the original twelve. Paul was directly commissioned by the risen Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 9:1). Barnabas was explicitly called an apostle alongside Paul in Acts 14:14. James, the Lord's brother, was also identified in connection with the apostles in Galatians 1:19.

However, the Greek word *apostolos* also had a broader meaning. In Philippians 2:25, Epaphroditus is called the messenger of the Philippian church. The word translated *messenger* is *apostolos*. Likewise, in 2 Corinthians 8:23, Paul refers to representatives of the congregations as the messengers of the churches, using the plural *apostoloi*.

These passages demonstrate that the word could describe individuals with different commissions and responsibilities. The original twelve occupied a unique foundational position. Paul received an extraordinary commission from the risen Christ. Others were recognized for missionary service or as representatives sent by congregations.

Therefore, the presence of apostles beyond the twelve does not automatically establish that every person called an apostle possessed the same authority. Nor does it establish that modern church planters or missionaries inherit the foundational authority of the apostles.

The New Testament recognizes different uses of the term apostle, but it does not teach that every commissioned messenger becomes a governing authority over the church.

7. THE PROPHETS — SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

The second ministry listed is prophets.

The New Testament records prophets within the early church.

Agabus is identified as a prophet in Acts 11 and appears again in Acts 21.

Paul also provides instructions for prophecy in the gathered church.

1 Corinthians 14:29 (KJV)

"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge."

This instruction is important.

Prophetic utterances were to be examined.

They were not automatically accepted as unquestionable commands.

The continuing operation of prophecy should not be confused with the establishment of a governing class of prophets.

A person may be used in prophecy without possessing authority to determine the decisions of every believer.

Likewise, an individual who claims to be a prophet does not become an additional source of doctrine.

The church must distinguish between spiritual gifts and claims of spiritual government.

1 Thessalonians 5:19–21 (KJV)

"Quench not the Spirit.

Despise not prophesyings.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

This is the proper balance.

We must not despise genuine spiritual gifts.

But we must test every spiritual claim.

No prophecy can overturn the written Word of God.

No prophetic title can exempt a minister from accountability.

AGABUS AND PAUL — DOES PROPHECY ESTABLISH AUTHORITY?

An important example appears in Acts 21:10–14.

The prophet Agabus accurately warned that Paul would be bound and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles at Jerusalem.

Acts 21:11 (KJV)

"And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

When the believers heard the prophecy, they urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

But Paul refused to change his course.

Acts 21:13 (KJV)

"Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Notice the distinction.

Agabus revealed what would happen.

The believers urged Paul to avoid the danger.

But Paul continued toward Jerusalem.

Paul had already testified in Acts 20:22–23 that the Holy Ghost was warning him of bonds and afflictions.

The prophecy confirmed the danger without establishing that Agabus possessed authority to govern Paul's decision.

The account does not diminish genuine prophecy.

It demonstrates that receiving a prophetic revelation does not automatically give someone authority over another minister.

We should also remember that Acts 13:1–3 records the Holy Ghost giving direction in a gathering that included prophets and teachers. Therefore, prophecy and spiritual revelation can contribute to the church's discernment and direction.

But this is different from establishing a permanent governmental hierarchy of prophets over pastors and congregations.

A genuine prophetic warning does not automatically become a command, and a genuine prophet does not automatically become the governing authority over those who receive the warning.

The New Testament requires us to distinguish between revelation, interpretation, personal counsel, and governing authority.

8. THE EVANGELISTS — PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

The third ministry is evangelists.

The Greek word is related to the proclamation of good news.

An evangelist announces the gospel.

Philip is specifically identified as an evangelist.

Acts 21:8 (KJV)

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him."

Earlier, Acts 8 describes Philip preaching Christ in Samaria.

Acts 8:5 (KJV)

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."

His ministry was accompanied by a response to the gospel.

People heard the Word.

They believed.

They were baptized.

The emphasis was upon Jesus Christ.

An evangelist is not simply a traveling speaker.

Nor does the title automatically indicate a particular level of spiritual authority.

The evangelist's central responsibility is the proclamation of the gospel.

Paul instructed Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:5 (KJV)

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

Timothy was instructed to do the work of an evangelist even though his responsibilities included broader ministerial oversight and teaching.

This demonstrates that ministerial functions can overlap.

A pastor should preach the gospel.

A teacher should explain the gospel.

A missionary should proclaim the gospel.

An evangelist may also teach and encourage believers.

The ministries are not necessarily isolated compartments.

They work together for the benefit of the church.

9. THE PASTORS — SHEPHERDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

The fourth ministry is pastors.

The word translated *pastors* in Ephesians 4:11 is related to shepherding.

A shepherd cares for the flock.

He feeds it.

He protects it.

He guides it.

He watches for danger.

Jesus identified Himself as the Good Shepherd.

John 10:11 (KJV)

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

Every faithful pastor must remember that the church belongs to Jesus Christ.

The pastor is entrusted with responsibility for the flock.

He does not own the people.

He does not have authority to rewrite Scripture.

He must not use spiritual leadership to control the private lives of believers beyond what the Word of God teaches.

Paul instructed the elders at Ephesus:

Acts 20:28 (KJV)

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The responsibility is serious.

The pastor must feed the church.

He must protect it from false doctrine.

He must exercise oversight.

He must recognize that he will answer to Jesus Christ for the way he has cared for God's people.

Peter gave a similar instruction.

1 Peter 5:2–3 (KJV)

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

Notice the balance.

Pastoral oversight is biblical.

Pastoral domination is not.

A pastor must lead.

But he must lead as a servant of Jesus Christ.

10. THE TEACHERS — ESTABLISHING BELIEVERS IN TRUTH

The fifth ministry listed is teachers.

Teaching is essential to the life of the church.

A congregation cannot remain spiritually healthy if it depends entirely upon emotional experiences.

Believers need to understand the Scriptures.

They need to know what they believe and why they believe it.

They need to distinguish sound doctrine from false teaching.

They need to learn how to apply biblical truth to daily life.

Paul instructed Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV)

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Notice the continuation of sound teaching.

Paul taught Timothy.

Timothy was to teach faithful people.

Those people were to teach others.

This is how biblical doctrine is preserved and communicated.

The teacher does not invent a new gospel.

He faithfully communicates the truth already revealed.

Teaching should produce understanding, conviction, and obedience.

A gifted teacher may help a congregation recognize errors that otherwise might go unnoticed.

But a teacher must also remain humble and accountable to Scripture.

Knowledge without love can become pride.

True biblical teaching should build up the church.

11. ARE PASTORS AND TEACHERS ONE MINISTRY OR TWO?

An important interpretive question concerns the relationship between pastors and teachers.

In the Greek text of Ephesians 4:11, pastors and teachers are linked more closely than the preceding ministries.

They share a grammatical construction that has led some interpreters to understand them as a combined ministry of pastor-teachers.

Others understand them as distinguishable ministries that are closely related.

The Greek grammar does not require the conclusion that every teacher is a pastor.

Nor does it establish that pastors and teachers must be entirely separate offices.

The close connection is significant.

Pastors must be able to teach.

1 Timothy 3:2 (KJV)

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"

Teaching is an important qualification for pastoral oversight.

However, not everyone gifted in teaching necessarily carries the responsibility of shepherding a congregation.

A Bible teacher may serve faithfully under pastoral leadership without ever being the pastor.

A pastor may also possess a strong teaching ministry.

The functions can overlap.

This raises an important question concerning the expression *fivefold ministry*.

The expression is a convenient description of the five ministry terms commonly identified in Ephesians 4:11.

But it is not itself a biblical command establishing five separate governmental offices.

We should not build an entire system of church authority upon a disputed grammatical distinction.

The important truth is that Christ gives the church the ministry necessary for its spiritual growth.

12. MINISTERIAL FUNCTIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS SEPARATE OFFICES

The New Testament does not always present ministry in the rigid categories that modern systems sometimes require.

Paul was an apostle, but he also preached, taught, evangelized, and cared for churches.

Timothy was instructed to preach the Word, teach sound doctrine, and do the work of an evangelist.

Philip was an evangelist, but he also explained Scripture and baptized believers.

Pastors must teach.

Teachers may evangelize.

Evangelists may help strengthen congregations.

These responsibilities are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

This does not mean that every minister is equally gifted in every area.

It means that the functions of ministry can overlap.

The body of Christ benefits from the diversity of gifts and callings.

A person may be particularly effective in evangelism.

Another may be especially gifted in teaching.

Another may be well suited for pastoral care.

The church should recognize and encourage genuine ministry without creating unnecessary divisions of rank.

The purpose is not to assign every minister a prestigious category.

The purpose is to accomplish the work of God.

13. WHY DOES PAUL GIVE DIFFERENT MINISTRY LISTS?

Ephesians 4:11 is not the only passage describing ministry within the church.

Consider Romans 12.

Romans 12:6–8 (KJV)

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Here Paul mentions prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy.

Now consider 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:28 (KJV)

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

This list differs from Ephesians 4.

Paul mentions miracles, healings, helps, governments, and tongues.

Why are the lists different?

Because Paul is not necessarily presenting an exhaustive organizational chart in each passage.

He is describing the diversity of God's work in the church.

Different passages emphasize different gifts, functions, and responsibilities.

The church should not ignore Ephesians 4.

But neither should it elevate that one list into a complete governmental system while minimizing the other passages.

All Scripture must be considered together.

The New Testament presents a living body with diverse ministries, not merely an organization arranged around five titles.

14. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GIFTS AND OFFICES?

Another important distinction concerns spiritual gifts and recognized ministerial responsibilities.

The Holy Ghost distributes gifts.

The church also recognizes qualified individuals for particular responsibilities.

These matters are related, but they are not identical.

A believer may receive a spiritual gift without becoming a pastor.

A person may be used in prophecy without being appointed to govern a congregation.

Someone may be effective in evangelism without holding a formal ministerial office.

Likewise, a pastor may exercise several gifts while carrying a continuing responsibility to shepherd the flock.

We must avoid assuming that every manifestation of a gift establishes a governmental position.

For example, if someone prophesies, does that automatically make the person a prophet with authority over other ministers?

Scripture does not establish that conclusion.

If someone is used in healing, does that make the person a ruler over churches?

No.

If someone establishes a congregation, does that automatically give him authority over every pastor in a region?

Again, no.

The New Testament also describes church leadership using terms such as elders, overseers, and shepherds. In Acts 20:17 and 20:28, Paul addresses the elders of Ephesus and identifies their responsibility to oversee and shepherd the flock. Peter likewise instructs elders to feed the flock and exercise oversight in 1 Peter 5:1–3. These passages demonstrate that the New Testament describes ministerial responsibility through overlapping terms and functions rather than presenting a universal five-tier organizational chart.

The New Testament requires us to distinguish the work God performs through individuals from the authority those individuals may claim.

15. DOES EVERY CHURCH NEED ALL FIVE MINISTRIES?

Some proponents of the modern fivefold ministry teach that a congregation cannot reach maturity unless it has all five ministries functioning in an identifiable structure.

But does Ephesians 4 say that?

The passage teaches that Christ gave ministries for the building up of His body.

It does not explicitly require every local congregation to appoint five individuals, each bearing one of the five titles.

Nor does it state that every church must belong to a network containing a modern apostle and prophet.

Consider the early congregations.

- Some had elders appointed.

- Some were served by traveling ministers.
- Some received instruction through letters.
- Some benefited from the ministry of evangelists and teachers.

The New Testament records a variety of circumstances.

The churches were connected through the gospel, fellowship, and apostolic teaching.

But Scripture does not present a universal rule requiring each local congregation to maintain a five-position leadership team.

The church as a whole benefits from the ministries Christ has given.

A local congregation may receive ministry from faithful evangelists, teachers, missionaries, and other servants without organizing itself into a fivefold governmental hierarchy.

The question should not be whether a church possesses five particular titles.

The question should be whether it is being faithfully taught, shepherded, equipped, and strengthened in Jesus Christ.

16. THE GOAL IS UNITY OF THE FAITH

Paul identifies the goal of ministry in Ephesians 4:13.

Ephesians 4:13 (KJV)

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"

The goal is unity of the faith.

It is the knowledge of the Son of God.

It is spiritual maturity.

It is growth toward the fullness of Christ.

Notice what Paul does not identify as the goal.

He does not say that the purpose of ministry is to establish the greatest number of apostolic networks.

He does not say that the church reaches maturity when every minister receives a particular title.

He does not say that maturity is measured by submission to a restored hierarchy.

The measure is Christ.

A mature church is grounded in truth.

It demonstrates love.

It remains faithful to the gospel.

It recognizes the authority of Scripture.

Its members grow in holiness and service.

Its leaders seek to equip rather than dominate.

Spiritual maturity is measured by conformity to Jesus Christ, not by the complexity of an organization's leadership structure.

17. PROTECTION FROM EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE

Paul continues:

Ephesians 4:14 (KJV)

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"

This verse is especially relevant to our series.

Why does Christ give ministry to His church?

One reason is to protect believers from doctrinal instability.

Immature believers may be impressed by a confident speaker.

They may be attracted to dramatic spiritual claims.

They may accept a teaching because it appears new or exciting.

They may assume that popularity is evidence of divine approval.

But Paul says the church must grow beyond that condition.

Faithful ministry produces discernment.

It teaches believers to examine Scripture.

It helps them distinguish biblical doctrine from human speculation.

It strengthens them against manipulation.

The irony is that a passage intended to protect believers from false doctrine can itself be misused to justify systems of authority that are not clearly established by Scripture.

We must therefore examine not only the ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, but also the teachings being attached to those ministries.

A minister who truly serves the purpose of Ephesians 4 should help believers become more firmly established in biblical truth.

18. SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

The next verse provides another essential safeguard.

Ephesians 4:15 (KJV)

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

Truth and love belong together.

Truth without love can become harsh and destructive.

Love without truth can become permissive and misleading.

Faithful ministry requires both.

Pastors must sometimes correct.

Teachers must sometimes identify error.

Evangelists must call people to repentance.

Believers must sometimes question spiritual claims.

But these responsibilities should be exercised with humility and concern for the souls of others.

The purpose is not to win arguments.

It is to help people grow in Jesus Christ.

The verse also identifies Christ as the head.

The church grows into Him.

It does not grow into dependence upon a modern apostle.

It does not grow into dependence upon a prophet.

It does not grow into dependence upon a religious organization.

Every legitimate ministry must point believers toward Jesus Christ.

19. EVERY PART OF THE BODY HAS A RESPONSIBILITY

Paul concludes this portion of his teaching with a description of the entire body working together.

Ephesians 4:16 (KJV)

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Notice the expression:

"Every part."

The church is not simply a group of believers supporting the ministry of a few important individuals.

It is a body in which every member has a responsibility.

The pastor cannot perform every task.

The evangelist cannot meet every need.

The teacher cannot provide every form of spiritual care.

The congregation must grow together.

Some members are highly visible.

Others serve quietly.

Some preach.

Others pray.

Some teach.

Others encourage.

Some give.

Others visit the sick or help those in need.

All these forms of faithful service contribute to the body.

A church that recognizes only prominent platform ministries has missed an important part of Paul's teaching.

The purpose of ministry is to develop the whole body, not to elevate a few members above the rest.

20. THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY AND THE 1948 LATTER RAIN MOVEMENT

The modern emphasis upon a restored fivefold ministry has an important historical relationship to the New Order of the Latter Rain.

Classical Pentecostal Christianity has long affirmed that Jesus Christ calls ministers and gives spiritual gifts to His church. The controversy surrounding the New Order of the Latter Rain was not simply whether apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers appear in Scripture. It concerned particular claims about their restoration, authority, and place in church government. Recognizing the ministries described in Ephesians 4 is not the same as accepting a restored apostolic hierarchy.

The revival began in February 1948 at Sharon Orphanage and Schools in North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Its leaders emphasized spiritual gifts, prophecy, the laying on of hands, and the restoration of ministries described in the New Testament.

The restoration of apostles and prophets became a significant part of the movement's teaching.

Ephesians 4:11 was used to support the expectation that God was restoring ministries considered neglected or absent from much of the church.

Some participants viewed this restoration as preparation for a greater end-time work.

However, we should distinguish between the biblical teaching that Christ gave ministries to the church and the movement's particular interpretation of how those ministries were being restored.

The historical record also requires nuance.

Not every participant in the Latter Rain movement held identical views concerning church government.

Not every person influenced by the revival accepted every teaching associated with it.

Nevertheless, the restoration of apostles and prophets became one of the movement's most controversial emphases.

The 1949 Assemblies of God resolution specifically rejected the teaching that the church was built upon present-day apostles and prophets.

That objection concerned claims about foundational authority, not a denial that God calls ministers or distributes spiritual gifts.

The question was whether the movement's interpretation of restored ministry went beyond what Scripture established.

21. FROM LATTER RAIN RESTORATION TO MODERN FIVEFOLD TEACHING

Ideas concerning restored apostolic and prophetic ministry continued in various independent Pentecostal, charismatic, and restorationist settings after 1949.

During the late twentieth century, C. Peter Wagner became a prominent advocate of contemporary apostolic leadership.

His teaching associated apostles and prophets with a changing understanding of church structure and spiritual government.

In some modern networks, Ephesians 4:11 is understood as establishing a restored governmental order.

Apostles may be described as providing overarching leadership.

Prophets may be understood as providing revelatory direction.

Evangelists, pastors, and teachers may be assigned complementary functions within the structure.

But we must distinguish these interpretations from the biblical text itself.

The New Testament lists ministries.

It does not explicitly establish every feature of these modern organizational systems.

We must also avoid claiming that every modern fivefold ministry organization descended directly from North Battleford.

Some teachings show similarities or historical influences.

Others developed through different networks and traditions.

A doctrinal resemblance does not automatically prove direct organizational continuity.

Our concern is not simply where a teaching originated.

Our concern is whether the teaching can be established from Scripture.

22. WHEN A MINISTRY MODEL BECOMES A REQUIREMENT

There is an important difference between recognizing ministries and requiring every church to adopt a particular organizational model.

A congregation may recognize the importance of evangelists, pastors, teachers, and other ministries.

It may invite experienced ministers to provide instruction and counsel.

It may cooperate with other churches.

It may support missionaries and church planters.

These are legitimate activities.

But problems arise when a particular fivefold structure is presented as a universal requirement established by God.

For example, a church may be told that it cannot reach maturity without submission to a modern apostle.

A pastor may be told that his ministry is incomplete unless a prophet identifies his place within a fivefold structure.

Believers may be told that questioning the system demonstrates resistance to God's restoration.

These claims require biblical examination.

Ephesians 4 does not explicitly teach them.

The church must not allow a useful description of ministry to become an additional rule that Scripture does not establish.

A ministry model may be helpful without being mandatory, and an organizational preference must never be elevated to the level of biblical doctrine.

23. THE DANGER OF MEASURING SPIRITUALITY BY TITLES

Another danger is the tendency to measure spiritual importance through titles.

An individual may prefer to be called an apostle rather than a pastor.

Another may claim to be a prophet because the title appears to carry greater spiritual authority.

Some may view ordinary pastoral ministry as less important than supposedly higher levels of ministry.

But Jesus taught a different understanding of greatness.

Mark 10:43–45 (KJV)

"But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Jesus did not teach His disciples to compete for religious rank.

He taught them to serve.

The highest example of ministry is Jesus Christ Himself.

He humbled Himself.

He served others.

He gave His life.

Every minister should remember that example.

A title cannot substitute for character.

An office cannot substitute for sound doctrine.

A reputation cannot substitute for humility.

And a claim of spiritual authority cannot substitute for obedience to Jesus Christ.

24. THE IMPORTANCE OF PASTORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Rejecting a restored fivefold governmental hierarchy does not mean rejecting accountability.

Pastors need fellowship.

They need counsel.

They need correction when necessary.

They should maintain relationships with other faithful ministers.

Congregations benefit from cooperation with other churches.

The New Testament teaches the importance of order and responsibility.

But accountability should not be confused with surrendering the authority of Scripture to an individual who claims an elevated spiritual office.

Pastors must remain subject to the Word of God.

Their teaching must be examined.

Their conduct must reflect Christian character.

Their leadership must be exercised with humility.

Hebrews 13:17 (KJV)

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

This passage establishes the seriousness of spiritual oversight.

But it does not make leaders infallible.

The same Scriptures that teach believers to respect faithful leadership also warn against false teachers and abusive authority.

Pastors must never use biblical submission as an excuse for personal domination.

And believers must not use the failures of some leaders as a reason to reject legitimate pastoral care.

The biblical pattern requires responsibility on both sides.

25. THE CHURCH NEEDS MINISTRY, NOT A NEW FOUNDATION

The church today needs strong biblical ministry.

It needs pastors who love God's people.

It needs teachers who understand the Scriptures.

It needs evangelists who preach repentance and salvation.

It needs missionaries willing to carry the gospel to new places.

It needs believers who exercise spiritual gifts in accordance with Scripture.

It needs prayer, holiness, compassion, and evangelism.

It needs leaders who are humble enough to be corrected.

It needs congregations willing to grow.

But it does not need another foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:11 (KJV)

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The church is not waiting for a restored hierarchy to make Jesus Christ its head.

He already is its head.

The church is not waiting for new foundational apostles to make the gospel authoritative.

The gospel is already authoritative.

The church is not waiting for a new revelation to establish its mission.

Jesus Christ has already commissioned His church.

Our responsibility is to obey what He has given us.

26. WHAT DOES A HEALTHY CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

A healthy church is not necessarily the congregation with the most elaborate leadership structure.

It is not necessarily the congregation with the greatest number of ministerial titles.

It is not necessarily the congregation with the most dramatic spiritual claims.

A healthy church is one that remains faithful to Jesus Christ and His Word.

Its ministers teach sound doctrine.

Its members are encouraged to study Scripture.

Its pastors provide faithful care.

Its evangelists proclaim the gospel.

Its teachers establish believers in truth.

Its members serve one another.

Its spiritual gifts operate in biblical order.

Its leaders remain accountable.

Its people grow in love, holiness, and spiritual maturity.

The church should not be measured merely by outward excitement or organizational complexity.

It should be measured by faithfulness to the biblical pattern.

Acts 2:42 (KJV)

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

This is still a powerful description of the church.

They continued in doctrine.

They continued in fellowship.

They continued in prayer.

They continued together.

The church does not need to abandon that pattern in pursuit of a supposedly superior system.

It needs to live it.

27. THE FIVEFOLD MINISTRY AND THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH TODAY

For classical Oneness Pentecostals, the central concern must remain faithfulness to the apostles' doctrine.

We believe in the continuing work of the Holy Ghost.

We believe God calls ministers.

We believe in spiritual gifts.

We believe in divine healing.

We believe in evangelism and missionary work.

We believe in biblical pastoral leadership.

We believe the church should grow in holiness and spiritual maturity.

These convictions do not require us to accept every modern claim about restored apostolic government.

The church can affirm Ephesians 4:11 without accepting an interpretation that creates a new foundational hierarchy.

The church can value prophetic ministry without surrendering doctrinal authority to modern prophets.

The church can recognize missionary and church-planting work without equating every church planter with the foundational apostles.

The church can appreciate experienced ministerial counsel without teaching that every pastor must submit to a modern apostle.

And the church can pursue spiritual maturity without making a particular fivefold structure the test of its legitimacy.

The goal is not to reject ministry.

The goal is to preserve ministry in its proper biblical place.

We do not need to restore the authority of the apostles by appointing new apostles. We need to restore faithfulness to the doctrine the apostles preached.

CONCLUSION — THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY IS THE MATURITY OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 4:11 is an important passage.

It teaches that Jesus Christ gave ministries to His church.

These ministries are not unnecessary.

They are part of God's provision for His people.

But the passage must be understood in its context.

Paul begins with humility, unity, and the oneness of the body.

He explains that Christ gives grace and ministry.

He identifies the purpose of those ministries as the equipping of believers and the building up of the church.

He describes the goal as unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and spiritual maturity.

He warns against every wind of doctrine.

He instructs believers to speak the truth in love.

And he concludes by describing the whole body working together under Jesus Christ.

The passage does not explicitly establish a restored five-level governmental hierarchy.

It does not require every congregation to appoint five separate ministerial officers.

It does not teach that modern apostles must govern pastors.

It does not authorize prophets to impose personal direction upon believers.

And it does not establish that a congregation is spiritually incomplete without membership in a modern apostolic network.

The New Order of the Latter Rain placed considerable emphasis upon restoring apostles, prophets, and other ministries.

Later movements developed various teachings concerning the fivefold ministry.

Some of those teachings emphasize legitimate aspects of Christian service.

Others make claims about authority and church government that must be carefully examined.

Our responsibility is to test every teaching by Scripture.

We must not despise the gifts Christ has given.

But neither should we add requirements that Christ has not established.

The church needs faithful ministers.

It needs sound doctrine.

It needs spiritual gifts operating in biblical order.

It needs pastors who shepherd, teachers who instruct, evangelists who proclaim, and believers who serve.

Above all, it needs Jesus Christ.

The purpose of ministry is not to establish a hierarchy of spiritual importance. It is to equip the saints, build up the body, and bring the church toward maturity in Jesus Christ.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank You for loving Your church and providing everything necessary for its spiritual growth.

We thank You for the ministers You have called and for the gifts You have given to Your people.

Help us to understand Your Word correctly.

Give us discernment to distinguish biblical ministry from human systems that go beyond the Scriptures.

Protect us from pride, ambition, and the desire for religious titles.

Teach every minister to serve with humility.

Give pastors wisdom to shepherd Your people faithfully.

Give teachers understanding to explain Your Word clearly.

Give evangelists boldness to proclaim the gospel.

Strengthen missionaries and those who establish congregations in places where Your truth is needed.

Help us to recognize and value the genuine operation of the Holy Ghost.

Keep us from despising spiritual gifts.

But also keep us from accepting every spiritual claim without examination.

Help every believer discover the responsibility and opportunity You have given within the body of Christ.

Let our churches grow in unity, holiness, truth, love, and spiritual maturity.

May we never become so concerned with ministerial positions that we forget the purpose of ministry.

You are the head of the church.

You are the chief cornerstone.

You are the Good Shepherd.

And You alone are worthy of all glory.

Help us to remain faithful to the apostles' doctrine and to serve You until Your coming.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

HISTORICAL SOURCES AND FURTHER STUDY

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2. **The General Council of the Assemblies of God.** *Minutes of the Twenty-Third General Council*, Seattle, Washington, September 1949. Resolution No. 7, *The New Order of the Latter Rain*. Primary documentation of Pentecostal objections to certain teachings associated with the New Order.
3. **Richard M. Riss.** *Latter Rain: The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Evangelical Awakening*. Historical study of the 1948 revival and its influence.
4. **The Sharon Star.** Issues published during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Contemporary material associated with Sharon Orphanage and Schools and the Latter Rain movement.
5. **Ernest Hawtin.** "How This Revival Began," *The Sharon Star*, August 1, 1949. A participant's account of the beginnings of the revival.
6. **C. Peter Wagner, editor.** *The New Apostolic Churches*. A source for examining contemporary apostolic church structures and interpretations of restored ministry.
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8. **Jimmy D. Bayes.** "Five-Fold Ministry: A Social and Cultural Texture Analysis of Ephesians 4:11–16," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, volume 3, number 1 (2010). An academic discussion of ministry offices and functions.
9. **Jonathan D. Worthington.** "The Pastors and Teachers in Ephesians 4:11," *Themelios*, volume 50, issue 3 (2025). A grammatical and contextual examination of the relationship between pastors and teachers.
10. **Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.** Archival resources concerning Pentecostal history, the New Order of the Latter Rain, and twentieth-century doctrinal controversies.

Historical clarification: The New Order of the Latter Rain of 1948 and later movements associated with the New Apostolic Reformation were not identical organizations. Similar teachings about restored ministry should not be treated as automatic proof of direct organizational continuity. Likewise, not every Christian who uses the expression *fivefold ministry* advocates a modern apostolic hierarchy.

SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Context and Purpose of Ministry: Ephesians 4:1–16; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 3:10–11.

The Ministries Given by Christ: Ephesians 4:7–13; 1 Corinthians 12:27–31; Romans 12:3–8.

Apostles and the Foundation of the Church: Acts 1:15–26; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19–22; Revelation 21:14.

Prophecy and Discernment: Acts 11:27–30; Acts 21:8–14; 1 Corinthians 14:1–33; 1 Thessalonians 5:19–22; 1 John 4:1–6.

Evangelism and Missionary Ministry: Acts 8:4–40; Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:1–5; Matthew 28:18–20.

Pastoral Leadership: John 10:1–18; Acts 20:17–32; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–4.

Teaching and Sound Doctrine: Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; Titus 2:1.

Humility and Servant Leadership: Matthew 20:25–28; Mark 10:42–45; Philippians 2:1–11; 1 Peter 5:1–4.

The Maturity and Unity of the Church: Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:13–16.