

5. Real Churches Understand Gifting

Our church is confused when it comes to spiritual gifts.

It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. (Ephesians 4:11)

In Germany, I was introduced to an exciting evangelical church plant, “The Hamburg Project.” The church planting team is led by Daniel. I quoted Ephesians 4:11 and asked their team, “What is your gifting?” Each teammate answered with clarity. Daniel has apostolic genius and evangelism gifts. Matthias is a teacher. Dominic is a shepherd. They appreciated each other and worked together as a team. The apostolic and evangelistic gifting of the lead pastor matched their “pioneer, launch large” church-planting model, and a well balanced team lead to a healthy start that grew to two hundred people in a couple of years.

Every real church is committed to the Great Commission. We all agree that we are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ, to go to all nations, to baptize disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to teach them to obey Jesus. But how? How are we designed to make disciples? What is our disciple-making pathway?

The big idea of this chapter is that a church’s disciple making needs to match the Ephesians 4:11 gifting of the lead pastor and over time the church needs a team that includes all the Ephesians 4:11 gifts. The disciple-making pathway of the church led by a gifted teacher is different from the disciple-making pathway of a gifted evangelist. Rapidly changing pathways are disruptive to a church just like rapidly changing majors are to students. “Recent research suggests that up to 80% of college freshmen will change majors before they graduate, some two or three times, causing 40% of college students to experience a “failure to launch.” (Stetzer 2010, 74) Churches get in trouble when they start out with a gifted evangelist and a seeker-driven pathway and then suddenly change to a Bible church pathway and then try to become a church of small groups.

In my view, the Ephesians 4:11 gifts are given to the church to equip every Christian for his or her work of ministry. Gifted teachers equip God’s people to know and apply the Scriptures. Gifted shepherds equip God’s people to care for one another. Gifted evangelists equip God’s

people to lead people to Jesus Christ. Gifted prophets equip God's people to "shine forth God's truth" in dark places. Gifted apostles equip every Christian to be on mission with God. As we serve the Lord by doing all of these as Christian responsibilities (teaching, shepherding, evangelism), one or more of these gifts emerge as our special contribution.

Teachers: Bible-driven pathway

(Paul) had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:9-10).

Teachers *speak and explain God's Word*. Paul chose a teaching driven pathway as he planted the church of Ephesus. This fit his gifting and his discernment was that this pathway fit the soil. My wife grew up in the Calvary Baptist Church of Covington, Kentucky, and her pastor was Dr. Warren Wiersbe. Northern Kentucky had many churches preaching the gospel, but few churches teaching the whole counsel of God. Hungry people flocked to this Bible-teaching church, including my wife's family. This church led my wife to Jesus Christ and taught her to obey everything Jesus commanded. I am grateful to God for this church.

The Bible-driven pathway, led by a gifted teaching pastor, needs to add other leaders who are gifted in evangelism, shepherding, proclaiming the truth on the cutting edge of the culture, and sending people on God's mission. Bible-teaching churches can struggle when their leader receives a call to another church and the new leader comes with a different gift. If the new pastor is an evangelist, people can long for the old path of Bible teaching. When a new pastor leads the church down a different pathway, the new wine does not taste good to the old-timers unless all the pathways have been opened up over the years.

Alan Hirsch is gifted as a teacher. In his book, *Forgotten Ways*, he describes how his ministry equipped teams around Ephesian 4:11.

So we had an apostolic team that focused on the trans-local, missional, strategic, and experimental issues facing the church.

We had a prophetic team that focused on listening to God and discerning his will for us, paying attention to social justice issues, and questioning the status quo of an increasingly middle-class church.

We had an evangelistic team whose task it was to oversee and develop evangelism and outreach.

The pastoral teams task was to develop community cell groups, worship, and counseling, and to enhance the love capacity of the church. The teaching teams task was to create contexts of learning and to develop the wisdom and understanding through Bible study, theological and philosophical discussion groups, etc. All were represented by a key leader on the leadership team. (Hirsch 2007, 174)

Pastors: transformation-driven pathway

Recent linguistic analysis of Ephesians 4:11 is very useful. The construction of “pastors and teachers” in the plural means that every gifted pastor is also a gifted teacher, but not every gifted teacher is also a gifted pastor. We see this in a Bible college. Some are gifted teachers, but they are not pastors. But a pastor must teach. “Pastors are gifted to teach (thus the latter is a subset of the former), but he (Paul) stops short of saying that all teachers are gifted to be pastors” (Arnold 2010, 260).

Life-on-Life Discipling	Small/Mid-Sized	Worship Services
1:1 or 1:3-7	1:12 or 1:40	20, 200, 2000, or 20,000
... iron sharpens iron	... not quickly broken	... spur one another on
Proverbs 27:17	Ecclesiastes 4:12	Hebrews 10:24-25
Intimacy & accountability	Involvement & acceptance	Identity & affiliation
Sense of satisfaction	Sense of safety	Sense of significance
Sensitivity to one another	Affinity with one another	Diversity of one another
Truth telling	Teaching one another	Pastor/teacher
Developing leaders	Tested leaders	Trusted leaders
Operation Timothy	Sticky Church/ABF/MC	Expository preaching

Pastors *shepherd God's flock*. Good shepherds seek the lost through the gospel and they seek life transformation through God's Word (Romans 12:1-2). Teachers enjoy the classroom. Shepherds enjoy creating community. The Sunday sermon by the shepherd is complemented by smaller groups and life-on-life disciple making. Pastors see several vehicles for the disciple-making pathway. Becoming a church planter exposed my wiring as a pastor. I worked hard in preaching and teaching every Sunday: I invested half my week in sermon and small group preparation. I used *Operation Timothy* (The

Christian Businessmen's Committee) in one-to-one disciple making and *24 Hours in John*, by Jim Petersen for home groups that shared the gospel naturally. We used *The Colossians 2:7 Series* for small groups that were closed, discipling groups. Then, we moved to a form of sermon-text-based small groups (see Larry Osborne's *Sticky Church*). We changed a traditional Sunday school, one man teaching an audience to Adult Bible Fellowships with a class shepherd, a teacher, and a social captain. Today, I use ABFs, Sticky Church groups, and missional communities for core group ministries.

Simple Church gives a good summary of the emphasis of pastors and teachers.

One church leader says, "We ask people to do three things a week here. Come to a worship service to fall more in love with God and his Word. Go to a small group to love others in community. Serve in a ministry to impact others. Love God, love others, and serve the world. We really try to keep it that simple. (Rainer 2006, 40-41)

Evangelists: seeker-driven pathway

Teachers speak on God's Word, pastors shepherd God's flock, and evangelists *spread God's gospel*. Simplistically, many churches in America's Bible belt preached the gospel every Sunday and called people to receive Christ. When these churches did not add the ministry of gifted teachers who fed people and gifted shepherds who led smaller groups, thousands of "Bible" churches and "Purpose Driven Churches" sprang up.

In one Bible-driven church, Bill Hybels served as a youth pastor (Park Ridge, Illinois, in the early 1970s). As he was a gifted evangelist, scores of youth came to know Christ, but their parents had little Bible background and could not connect with the meat served up in this Bible-teaching church. Bill and over 100 youth started a new kind of church. The innovation was "seeker services" on Sunday, where Bill preached Christ; "New community" services were on Wednesday with people like John Ortberg teaching the Bible; and a strong commitment to home bible studies permeated the week. By Bill's own admission, the seeker-driven model matches his gifts of evangelist and leadership (Leadership Network 1997, 123).

God spreads gifts among leaders who need to work together as the "shepherd's staff." Some gifted leaders might be on the board while others are in the congregation. In our first church, our evangelist was a

painter at John Deere who loved to lead evangelistic home bible studies. Our most gifted Sunday-school teacher was a physical therapist who gave the meat of the Word of God to our hungry people. The Ephesians 4:11 gifts that Christ gives to a church are not all paid staff. Evangelists need to learn the wisdom of D. L. Moody, "I would rather put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men."

The seeker-driven church needs an evangelist with the gift of leadership. When a pastor with the gift of teaching tries to use the "Willow Model" it does not work. A teacher cannot just come up with messages that make powerful connections to seekers and new Christians, just as an evangelist cannot just produce expository preaching that feeds the soul. The disciple-making pathway needs to match the lead pastor's gifting.

Prophets: truth-driven pathway

Prophets *shine forth God's truth*. Capital "P" Prophets gave us the Word of God and were foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20). Here I'm speaking of little "p" prophets, who "shine forth" the truth in strong preaching or in a passion for the gospel. Not every senior pastor has a strong prophetic voice.

Two disciple-making pathways are popular with prophets. One is the pulpit-centered church. Every generation needs their John the Baptist who calls God's people to repentance. A mega church (over 2,000 people in weekend worship services) often has a senior pastor with a strong prophetic voice. Some prophets lead smaller congregations because the prophet is so unique, or they prefer to work alone, or they just do not build a team that can conquer the complexity of a large church. A second disciple-making pathway popular with prophets is the "experimental church" that seeks to flow along the cutting edge of culture.

Erwin McManus's Mosaic Church is an example of an "experimental church." "At Mosaic, the community where I serve as lead pastor in Los Angeles, we don't describe ourselves as a modern church or a postmodern church, a contemporary church or an emerging church. The only description I use is that we are an *experimental* church. We volunteered to be God's R&D Department.... A part of our ethos (the spirit of our congregational culture) is a value for risk, sacrifice, and creativity" (McManus 2005, 50-51). McManus tells a story that

describes the spirit of innovation.

The Church Communication Network sent me an invitation to do a session on leadership in one of their national conferences... I would follow one of the most credible experts on church leadership I was honored. Somewhere in his lecture he started to say something that totally threw me. Pointblank he instructed, "Don't be an innovator; be an early adaptor ... the innovator is the guy who eats the poisonous mushroom and dies.

The early adaptor is the guy right next to him, who doesn't have to eat it. "

After thanking him for his amazing contribution to the body of Christ and for mentoring me through his books and ministry I went on to thank him for a new metaphor for my life. *I am a mushroom eater....* Any day now might be my last supper. But without risking the poisonous mushrooms, we never would have discovered the joys of Portobellos.

The barbarian call is just this simple; we are called to be mushroom eaters. A world without God cannot wait for us to choose the safe path. If we wait for someone else to take the risk, we risk that no one will ever act and that nothing will ever be accomplished. John the Baptist was a mushroom eater, and it cost him his life. (McManus 2005, 50-51, emphasis added)

Apostles: sent to drive Gods mission

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

The word "apostle" is used in three ways in the New Testament. First, Jesus chose from all his disciples, the capital "A" Apostles. They were given his authority and did not act merely on their own authority. In my view, the last of the "Apostles" was Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8), who was personally commissioned by the risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road (Galatians 1). The New Testament is the "Apostolic" teaching (Acts 2:42), that is unique and inerrant. The early church fathers understood there was a categorical difference between the Apostles and themselves. As Ignatius of Antioch said around AD 110, "I do not command you like Peter and Paul, they were Apostles; I am a sinful man." The Apostles are unique.

In the New Testament there were also "small-letter" apostles sent by the churches as "messengers" (Philippians 2:25) or "representatives"

(2 Corinthians 8:23). Small-letter apostles are motivated by “concern for the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28) and church planting (Acts 13-14).

The third way “apostle” is used is to refer to every Christian as a “sent one,” an ambassador of Jesus Christ. “As the father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21) applies to every Christian. “Sent ones” in turn send people in their ministry on the mission of God. “Sent ones” lead to “sent ones” that lead to “sent ones.” Where this is strong, there is reproduction and multiplication.

Alan Hirsch calls this gift of apostleship today “apostolic genius.” People with apostolic gifting often become missionaries, lead house-church movements, or lead large churches that rapidly multiply. This gifting emphasizes multiplication. One tool that tries to measure apostolic gifting is an online test developed by Hirsch. You can take his test at: <http://www.theforgottenways.org/index.aspx>.

Dave Ferguson describes a person with apostolic genius as a spiritual entrepreneur.

"People with the apostolic gift see over the horizon. They're able to look at the spiritual landscape and see where God is working." Ferguson recognizes this drive to extend God's kingdom and initiate new things within himself, but he avoided the term "apostolic" for years. Instead, he described himself as a "spiritual entrepreneur"—a term with less theological baggage and more cultural panache."

Ephesians 4:11 teams

In *The Shape of Things to Come*, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch propose a sociological look at APEST.

- The entrepreneur (apostle) is the groundbreaker and strategist who initiates an organization’s mission.
- The questioner (prophet) disturbs the status quo and challenges the organization to move in new directions.
- The communicator/recruiter (evangelist) takes the organization’s message to those outside and sells it to them.
- The humanizer (shepherd) provides the organizational glue by caring for the individuals inside it.
- The systematizer (teacher) organizes the various parts into a working unit and articulates that structure to the other members. (Frost and Hirsch 2003, 174)

“The Hamburg Project” referred to at the beginning of this chapter

illustrates a new global commitment to church starts that utilize a team of these gifted leaders rather than one gifted leader. The lead pastor does all the duties: speaking the very Word of God, shepherding God's people, spreading the gospel of God, shining forth the truth of God, being sent on God's mission, and sending everyone. As leaders do all these duties, the unique gifting of each member of the leadership team begins to appear and they can work together to equip all of God's people for their work.

One way to understand the health of a church is to picture concentric circles. These concentric circles are in every church. A healthy church has a similar number of people in each of the circles. For instance, if the vast majority of people are all committed and core people, the church needs new Christians and people in the crowd who are just seekers.

City (lost) outside the largest circle

Crowd (leaners) the largest concentric circle

Christians (learners) next largest concentric circle

Committed (laborers) next to the center circle

Core (leaders) center circle

Teachers love to give meat to the core and the committed. If a teacher works alone over a long time, a core church of committed people develops (the two inner circles). New people will be committed Christians coming for "good Bible teaching." The crowd and new Christians are small in number. The disciplinemaking pathway is often teaching the Bible on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night.

Pastor-teachers love the core, the committed, and Christians. If a pastor works alone over a long time, three circles are strong—a strong core, committed laborers, and learning Christians. New people come for "a good church." The crowd and the new Christians are smaller unless God's people are equipped for their works of service and sent into the city. The disciple-making pathway emphasizes feeding the flock on Sundays, developing committed smaller groups, and raising up good core leaders.

Evangelists give the gospel to the crowd. If an evangelist works alone over a long time, the two outer circles are strong but are supported by a small core of committed Christians who want to reach the lost. Over the years, core and committed people can leave in a

“maturity migration” (Osborne, DMin class at TEDS), looking for the meat of the Word. The disciple-making pathway focuses on Christians bring friends on Sunday morning.

Prophets love to work with the crowd, shining God’s truth. If the ground is good, a large church can appear, or on hard ground an innovative model of penetrating the darkness can develop. If a prophet works alone over a long time, the church can be a mile wide and an inch deep, or an innovative church that is unique, sterile, and will never reproduce into other cities. The disciple-making pathway needs shepherds to expand the pathway to include small groups and a disciple-making ethos.

Apostles love to work in the city, multiplying at every level and starting churches from city to city. If the ground is good for a church plant, an apostolic genius can be in one church for many years. If the other gifts are not brought into the church, frustrations can grow. If all the gifts are used, people multiply to other cities like the church of Antioch. The disciple-making pathway starts in the city with missional communities and multiplying small groups can quickly spread.

The teacher gravitates to the core and the committed. The pastor-teacher works with the core, committed, and Christians. The evangelist seeks to equip Christians to reach the crowd, and the prophet lives on the edge of the city to reach out. The apostle builds a sense of “we are sent ones” into the church ethos and emphasizes multiplication.

A healthy church has roughly equal numbers of people moving to the center and back out to the city. If one leader dominates and does not build a team, a two- circle church develops that is unhealthy and will not multiply. Paul told Timothy to not only focus on his anointing, but also to do the work of an evangelist. So too, members of a healthy leadership team know their gifts and do the work of all these special gifts as a leadership responsibility. The team needs to keep asking questions: Where is the pathway from each circle into the core? And how to do we send the core to the city?

City (lost) What is your pathway from city to crowd?

apostolic and prophetic focus on equipping God’s people for their works of service

Examples: serving in the community
concerts

singles ministry/VBS
missional communities
evangelistic Bible studies and evangelistic outreach opportunities
Crowd (leaners) What is your pathway from crowd to Christians?
prophetic and evangelistic focus on equipping God's people for
their works of service

Examples: seeker worship services
innovative ways to impact the community with God's truth
equipping for one-on-one evangelism and friendship evangelism
Alpha groups and other ministries that carry the gospel to the city

Christians (learners) What is your pathway from Christians to committed?

Pastor-teacher focus on equipping God's people for their works of service
Examples: training apprentices at every level expository sermons
sermon-text-based small groups, adult Bible fellowships,
accountability groups

Committed (laborers) What is your pathway from committed to the core?

teacher focus on equipping God's people for their works of service
Examples: expository sermons

elders, deacons, deaconesses, ministry team leaders
leadership community (VHS—Vision, Huddle, Skills)

Core (leaders) What is your pathway from the core to the city?
apostolic focus on equipping God's people for their works of service

Examples: serving in community service organizations
starting community service opportunities
planting new churches

My purpose with this chapter is to help you match the gifts of a lead pastor to the disciple-making pathway that fits him and fits his city. I hope the lead pastor will understand his wiring and work hard to build a complementary team that includes each of the the Ephesians 4:11 gifts. I hope for lead pastors to work toward fulfilling all five of these duties of the ministry (teaching, shepherding, evangelism, shining forth God's truth, and sending people on God's mission), and I trust that in time we can discover our unique gifting.