

## ***RECAPTURING THE MASTER'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH***

*(Part 1: Ephesians 4:11-16)*

In this day and age where the so-called contemporary American church keeps on reinventing itself to fit into the culture of this world, there seems no limit to how far some churches will go in adopting new gimmicks, new techniques and new methodologies to entertain people and entice them to join their "church." But we must remember that the true church does not belong to the world. The true church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of reinventing the church, we must recapture what Jesus, the Lord and head of the church, sets forth as the biblical plan, design and pattern for the church. Ephesians 4:11-16 presents the Master's plan for the church: Gifted and godly leaders equip the believers for ministry for the building up of the church towards unity and maturity. Let's consider the first feature of Christ's plan for His church.

### ***1. Christ gives \_\_\_\_\_ to His church.***

Our Lord Jesus, as the ascended Lord and Head of the church, not only gives certain spiritual gifts to individual believers (Eph. 4:7-10). He also gives gifted and godly ministers and leaders to the whole church to equip the believers. Paul says, "*And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers*" (Eph. 4:11). All these gifts involve the ministry of the Word. All these gifted and godly men are enabled and appointed by God to teach the Word of God to the people of God because there would be no founding of the church, no growth of the church and no maturing of the church without the ministry of God's Word.

The apostles and the prophets are foundational, unrepeatable and unique gifts given by Christ during the inaugural and beginning stage of the founding of the New Testament church (Eph. 2:20). The apostles are eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus, specially commissioned by Christ to establish the church, to receive, declare and write God's Word and to confirm the proclamation of God's Word through signs, wonders and miracles (Eph. 3:5; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4). In its technical sense, the apostles refer to the original twelve apostles plus the Apostle Paul. The New Testament prophets are those endowed by the Holy Spirit with the gift of prophecy for the purpose of writing and communicating God's Word to instruct and edify the church (2 Peter 1:19-21; Acts 15:32; 1 Cor. 14:3). The Lord Jesus built His church upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. Once the foundation of the church was laid and the New Testament Scriptures were completed, the work of the apostles and the prophets was finished.

For the ongoing ministry of the Word for the life and ministry of the church until Christ returns, our Lord gave His church the evangelists, the pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). The evangelists are those gifted to proclaim the saving gospel, lead people to Christ, instruct new believers with God's Word, and then move on to new territories where Christ is not named (Acts 8; 21:8). Along with the evangelists, Jesus also gifted the church with pastors and teachers. The biblical role of the pastor is to care, lead, protect and feed the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2-3). The pastor must oversee and lead God's people willingly, eagerly and by being an example to the flock. The supreme test of the effectiveness of every pastor and spiritual leader is the example of a godly life (Acts 20:17-21; 1 Tim. 4:12). In addition to leading the flock, the pastor must prioritize the role of teaching God's Word to God's people (John 21:15-17; Mark 1:38; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:1-2). As Christ's church, we must pray for the moral integrity and godly character of our pastors and leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hosea 4:9).

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