

Unity and Diversity

Releasing the variety of gifts that
God has put in the church

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Foreword

My ministry began in the context of a small Baptist church in the rural county of Oxfordshire, UK. Having been raised in the city of Liverpool, I had a lot to learn about life in a rural situation. I probably had even more to learn about how ministry worked on the ground. I had done theological and ministerial training, and had lots of ideas, but not much practical experience! Some of these ideas were good and practical, and others theoretical, and, as I would learn, not very realistic at all.

Despite having been raised in a Baptist church, and being by theological conviction definitely Baptist, I nonetheless started to ask myself profound questions about some of my assumptions of church life.

For example, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was precious to me. It was clear to me that every individual believer had their own personal access to the Father through Christ, and therefore the ability to pray and lead others into the presence of God, and equally to minister for God to others, and yet we didn't seem to see that happening in the church that I was leading. There was still something vaguely "priestly" about the

way the pastor led others in worship. He presided, he prayed, and he preached the word of God, which ran directly in the face of the treasured Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Actually, the major outworking of this doctrine appeared to be the rather noisy and badly behaved democratic church meetings where everyone had the liberty to say exactly what they thought about the life of the church. There was not always a great deal of wisdom dispensed in these settings, which you might expect from mature Christians. I recognised something slightly dysfunctional here!

A further question started to nag at me in a very profound way, too. Put bluntly, it was: "Why aren't people changing here?" This may sound like a rather judgmental question, but it was still one I couldn't help asking myself. For we would gather for worship, which was relatively attractive, bright and breezy, and I would preach what I didn't think were wholly bad sermons, especially as they were quite well prepared, and people would come out, shake hands with the pastor, and say "Nice hymns, pastor." Or even, "Nice talk, pastor." But I was unable to detect significant change in spiritual mindsets, or obvious response, or dedicated lifestyle. So, I started to ask myself about how people were transformed and changed by the experience of worship and preaching. Both of these things are still exceptionally important for me.

Worship introduces us into the presence of God, softens our heart, and focuses our attention on God who walks with us in all of life, and our relationship with Him; and preaching inspires faith, boldness and perseverance, or encourages and strengthens people's following after Christ – there is a definite "feel good" factor produced by good preaching about Christ, his work and his promises. But over a period of time, it was clear to me that the main agent of change was personal discipleship, probably a

combination of one-to-one discipleship and small group discipleship (oddly enough, just as Jesus practised it!), and that there was no short cut to this. Others have written very well on this¹.

Who is supposed to do what?

These questions were intertwined with another very important issue for me, which is the subject of this book: how does ministry work in the church? What is the role of the pastor, and what is the role of other people in the church? How do we get everyone in the church functioning in their gifts and ministries? How do all become empowered for the dynamic spiritual life that God is calling them to? How do we develop a better sense of team? And is this simply a matter of preference for the culture in which we live, or is there a clear theology underlying this? And then, how do we help everyone in the church see the need for change?

One of the things that I saw early on in my ministry was that the pattern of simply having pastor and deacons was not true to the Bible. It was clear that some of the deacons had more “spiritual” wisdom, insight and gifting, and others had more practical organising, administrating and serving gifts. After teaching on this, we moved to a pattern of appointing elders to take spiritual oversight and deacons to continue practical serving, so that each person was functioning in their appropriate gifting. Otherwise, “the pastor” was effectively the only elder, and it was clear that, in the New Testament, elders were always appointed corporately, and worked in teams.

¹ See bibliography: Dunkley, Mehta

As we sought to develop ministry that would grow the church, it soon struck me that the appointment of elders was only the first step in ministry development in our church. What became clear was that, even in our team of elders, there were limits to the ministries which were actually functioning in the local church. In particular, we studied all that the apostle Paul said about apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers working together, normally called the 'fivefold ministries'. We saw that they were given to the church to equip all God's people for their work of ministry, and soon came to realise that these ministries were definitely not all in evidence in most local churches, and definitely not in ours, so perhaps we needed to try to find ways of developing them in the local church.

This small book is born out of this desire: to articulate the essentials of the apostolic and the other four ministries described in Ephesians 4:11 as fundamental to the life of every local church. It seemed to me when I was first introduced to these many years ago, in the context of this small rural church in Oxfordshire, that there was a clear pattern of ministry here that we needed to aspire to in churches that were seeking to model themselves on a New Testament pattern. But, in the context of small local rural churches, could this be realisable? And inevitably, as church life moves forward, we have to keep asking ourselves questions about what we are doing, and whether we are fulfilling biblical models and being fruitful as we work with them. Leaders need to keep asking themselves questions about how they are leading, and whether they are in ruts in leadership style.

Challenges for the church today

It seems to me that there are two or three challenges that we are still facing:

The first is that, even when charismatic churches accept the existence of the fivefold ministry spoken of in Ephesians 4, we are not always very focused in seeking to train people for these ministries or put them into practice. Leadership teams revert to what they can do most easily, and end up managing what they already have in operation. In particular, there are still a lot of pastor-centred churches (witness many advertisements in Christian publications for church leaders or youth/evangelistic leaders). This can't be right!

More recently, it has become apparent to me that there has been some significant confusion over these ministries, and how we see them working today, and indeed whether we need to see them working in the same way today as in previous generations. In a major way, the calling and role of the apostle has become increasingly diffuse in the church at large. In many circles, anyone who feels themselves to be "sent" or "missional" in some way happily describes themselves as apostolic. And hopefully, if they are engaged in some task or calling to advance the mission of the gospel of Jesus, they are indeed sent, commissioned and anointed by Christ! But there is surely more to being apostolic, in the New Testament meaning of the word, than this. Equally, those who think of themselves as strategic thinkers might call themselves apostolic. Is that what it means? Or a combination of them both? Or are there other elements too? What was meant by being "apostolic" in the New Testament and by those early apostles of Christ? And how do we cope with the desire in some parts of the international church to have titles, and the equally profound desire in other parts of the

church not to use titles but simply to pursue, humbly, ministry for Christ? In the wider toing and froing of this conversation, it is possible that our clarity of thinking is lost?

Equally, there are many reserves about the prophetic ministry. This has come about through certain malpractices in the church. For instance, in Africa and India, there have been so-called prophets who have made a living out of their prophetic ministry, have charged people significant amounts of money to prophesy some blessing over them, but who have brought intimidation and fear to people who have not paid them enough. And in the West, there have been people who have spoken prophetic words over people who have been totally unaccountable for what they have prophesied. These prophecies have been full of imagination, but have not been realised, and they have therefore discredited prophetic ministry.

So, we are in a situation of quite a lot of confusion. My appeal is going to be: by whatever name we call them (although I personally have no problem with the names given in the New Testament) we need all of these different ministries if the church is to thrive, grow and be fruitful in the earth. We need to understand how they work, how they need to be teamed up, and what the purpose of them is in the overall mission of God's church in the world. So how do we encourage and train people for these ministries?

My concern in this book

My concern in this book is practical. I am not seeking to write a theological justification for contemporary apostolic or other fivefold ministries. Others have done that before me, and I am

indebted to their work, practice, and clarity of understanding². I hear little question these days as to whether these ministries exist in the modern-day church. But I do not see them being positively developed in many churches, and see few examples of effective apostolic teams which include all of these ministries, and which are seeking to develop more of them.

This will lead us to ask: “What sort of leadership and ministries are we currently trying to develop for the future?” Are we clear on what sort of leadership and ministry we want to develop in our churches, and how we should go about this? How can we develop networks of ministry that can work together in harmony, producing strong and thriving churches – big ones for big cities, and smaller ones for smaller towns and villages, but nonetheless strong and thriving, rather than struggling and merely surviving?

I will spend more time talking about apostolic ministry, and less time describing the other ministries. This doesn't mean I think that the apostolic is more important than the others (despite Paul stating in 1 Corinthians 12:28 that God has set in the church first of all apostles, and second prophets). I think it is simply that the apostolic ministry sets in place the context in which all the other ministries will function best. If we can get the apostolic context functioning well, we can hopefully get apostolic teams and the other four ministries well-coordinated, working harmoniously and functioning fruitfully.

² See bibliography: Prince, Coombs, Devenish

Being practical, not theoretical

My concern is also not to try to justify the existence of the fivefold ministry in theory. Their existence as a gift to the church from the ascended Christ is very clear in Ephesians 4. The problem is that, even in churches which believe in the fivefold ministries, our practice is often poor, and we have patterns and titles of ministry ('Senior Pastor', senior leader, Bishop, leadership team) which are at worst erroneous and at best confused. There is a breadth of gifts given by Christ for the good of the whole church, and our equipping of people for these ministries is often inadequate. So, my concern is practical: how do we get these gifts and ministries functioning in the church as we should?

My hope is that this little book can become something of a reference book for you, as you seek to build team this way, and so I have opted for simple direct headings, to help you look things up easily!

What I mean by ministry, leadership and church

And perhaps it will help for me to seek to define some of the words I will use:

Ministry or ministries: are different ways in which we can serve in the Body of Christ with the different gifts that God has put into us. They are not leadership positions, but acts of service.

Leaders or leadership teams are those groups who are entrusted with the overall leadership of the church. They may have slightly different names, but will be recognised by the body of the church. Leadership in the New Testament church was always corporate, i.e. entrusted to a group of people, who work together in team.

When I refer to the *church*, I am not talking about an institution, but a family of God's people. It is a body with many members, and Christ's headship in the church is aimed at getting all of the members of the body functioning as they should. The church is organic, not an organisation (although some good organisation helps!).

Chapter 1:

God's big plan for his church

The sort of leadership we need in the church is determined by two things: Christ's ultimate plan and intention for his church, and what we believe Christ is calling us to do in this day, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Putting it more simply, what is the Biblical pattern of leadership in the church, and how do we apply it today?

It is the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus that most clearly speaks about God's plan for his church in the first century, and through the ages in general. It is a big picture revelation of God's universal plan for the church in His world, which has practical implications for how God's people are supposed to live. It is suggested that this might well have been written first to the church in Ephesus, but then acted as a round robin letter for other churches, given the general scope of this picture of the church, and also given the fact that there are no specific practical problems or heresy issues that are addressed in this letter.

Writing sometime around AD60, the apostle Paul is seeking to demonstrate the massive purpose that God has for his world, in which the church has a key part to play. Before outlining this as simply as possible, it is worth reminding ourselves that Paul was involved in establishing this church in Ephesus, and had made Ephesus a base of operations for himself and his team for just over two years. Ephesus was a key city in Asia Minor (now Turkey), a centre of finance and commerce, since it was at a crossroads of trade routes for this region. It also had a temple to the Roman goddess Diana, which made it a centre of religious influence. It was a multicultural and multi-ethnic city, with a Jewish element alongside its own indigenous population.

Grace poured out

Paul starts his letter by listing the blessings of God's grace which have been poured out on God's people through the coming of Jesus Christ to his world. God has a plan to adopt people into his family, through the redemption and forgiveness that comes through Christ. It's an amazing demonstration of his grace, and it was a plan which was waiting for the right time to put into effect, the ultimate goal being

“to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.”

(Ephesians 1:10)

The fulfilment of this plan has now started with the grace that has been poured out on God's people, the church, which is why people are coming to Christ, believing the gospel, and receiving the Spirit, who is the first instalment of God pouring out his life into the earth, and is a guarantee that he will complete the job!

Having started this outpouring of praise (Ephesians 1:1-14) about all that God has begun to do in the earth, through bringing salvation to God's people, Paul bursts into a great apostolic prayer. It's a prayer full of thanksgiving for what God has begun to do, not least through the church in Ephesus. Paul prays that the Christians in Ephesus will really understand the massive import of what is happening in Ephesus:

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, *the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*"

(Ephesians 1:17-22)

These two phrases – "*to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ*" and "*the fullness of him who fills everything in every way*" – are massively significant phrases which highlight the cosmic scale of God's plan which has begun to be executed through Christ, and which is accomplished through the church. It is still vital that the church understands what a pivotal role it

plays in the accomplishment of God's plan to redeem the world and to fill everything with his presence. The church is the starting-point of all that God wants to accomplish in the nations globally – and in the universe. That's an amazing thought!

Salvation individual and corporate

Ephesians chapter 2 roots this cosmic plan that God is working out through Christ in the context of the local church. The plan is worked out first of all by God saving lots of individuals personally (2:1-10). He shows them his grace and mercy, forgives them their sin when they were thoroughly enslaved by it, raises them up with Christ and seats them with him in heavenly places. Through these individuals saved by grace, God will show his amazing kindness in the future; in the present, they are God's new creation, created in Christ to do good works, prepared in advance by God for them to do.

But this is only the first step in this incredible salvation that God is working out. The second step of this cosmic plan is to unite in one new humanity people who formerly were at enmity with one another, Jews and non-Jews. Jesus saves one group, then he saves the next group, and he unites them in one body, one people that he is building together. The barriers between them are torn down, as they enjoy the same access to a loving Father God. The conclusion of this is not just many people saved as individuals, but a new body of people saved individually, and also **united collectively**, as a remarkable demonstration that God is doing something remarkably new in the earth!

“Consequently, you [Jews and non-Jews] are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles

and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”
(Ephesians 2:19-22)

God’s plan for non-Jews

Paul is on quite a journey of explanation and revelation here. He stops, as if to say: “Have you really understood what I am saying here?” Because what he is saying is stunning news for both Jews and non-Jews (often called Gentiles, which for Jews means all other nations who are not Jews, and not therefore normally seen as part of God’s plans for his people). Actually, he is unashamedly claiming that he has received revelation as an apostle of Christ of a “mystery” which hadn’t been known in past generations, but had now been revealed to him, and to a current generation of God’s apostles and prophets.

In Ephesians 2:20, Paul says that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. Commentators differ as to who these apostles and prophets are. Some think that they are the prophets of the Old Testament, who were the key players of God’s revelation in previous generations, and with whom was associated by tradition the writing of most of the Old Testament, while the apostles are the apostles of the New Testament, who were significant in being the key authors of the New Testament. In other words, the foundation of the church is rooted in OT and NT revelation. This may be true in part, but is definitely not the whole of what Paul is saying. In Ephesians 2:19-22 and Ephesians 3:1-6, Paul is saying that this new united humanity or

household of God is built on apostolic and prophetic foundations with a fresh revelation of the mystery of this new “togetherness” of Jews and Gentiles. He is saying that this was not known or understood in previous generations, but *“has now been revealed by the Spirit through God’s holy apostles and prophets”*. In other words, current day apostles and prophets have seen and understood something new that God has done through Christ and is doing in the church in Ephesus (and, presumably, other churches).

Have we got it yet?

This is why Paul seems to stop in chapter three to talk further about his call to ensure that Jews and Gentiles understand the nature of God’s plan, and the stunning nature of the revelation that has now become clear.

“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.”

(Ephesians 3:6)

Note “heirs together [...] members together [...] and sharers together”. And Paul sees his ministry as a mystery that has been “hidden in God” now being revealed especially to Gentiles. Because God’s plan is that *“now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God [to bring these irreconcilable and implacable enemies together in one Body] should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 3:10).

This incredible former mystery and plan of God requires some remarkable intervention from God to make it work. Which is why Paul now goes on to pray another incredible apostolic

prayer that this plan of God should actually be effective on the ground in Ephesus. He prays that God may strengthen the believers in Ephesus by his power working right inside them, that Christ himself may dwell in their hearts through faith, and that they may be rooted and empowered by the incredible, vast love of God himself. He prays that they may be filled with Christ's love which has no limits. He concludes this prayer with the most incredible finale:

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”
(Ephesians 3:20-21)

I am often amused to hear Christians very simply adapting these words to lots of different prayers: “So thank you, Lord, that you are able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or think....” It may be true that these words can be relevant to lots of our prayers. But actually, when you think of what the apostle Paul is actually praying, that Jews and non-Jews should live in an amazing united family of believers, with no divisions or prejudices spoiling this fellowship, because of the love of Christ at work in them, we understand that he is asking for something truly miraculous! For the believers to live in a fellowship of multi-ethnic, probably multi-linguistic, and multi-background roots, is going to take a work of God that is truly amazing. God has no small plan for his church, and it will take God himself to help us fulfil it!

Questions for reflection

1. How much do I really believe, as a church leader, that God has such big plans for unity within the church? How have I expressed this belief in the last five years (e.g. faith-filled 'impossible' initiatives, dedication to 'big' prayers, etc.)?
2. Fundamental unity in the Body of Christ is a major factor in God's design for the church. How have I/my team made it possible for, and encouraged, the church to be a relational body, not just a service or event to attend?
3. How does this understanding of the Body of Christ affect my leadership of people? In what areas might I need to change the way I lead and how?
4. *For group discussion:* How can our team live out this reality, of the church as a relational body?

Pray

Pray for greater unity within your church and leadership team(s).

Chapter 2: God's big plan outworked in Ephesus

And now we come to the practical outworking on the ground. It's great to talk in the lofty terms that we have described Paul using, but how does the church get there?

Chapters 4-6 of this letter to the Christians in Ephesus bring us the following outline:

- Ephesians 4:1-6 – Fundamental unity in the Body of Christ
- Ephesians. 4:7-16 – Diversity of ministry leading to every member ministry in the Body of Christ
- Ephesians 4:17-5:20 – A new behaviour and lifestyle, lived in the power of the Holy Spirit
- Ephesians 5:6-9 – New relationships within families and the workplace
- Ephesians 6:10-20 – New spiritual strength in prayer and spiritual warfare

We may imagine that the diversity of population in first-century Ephesus would have been incredibly marked and colourful. Paul starts by outlining that, whatever the diversity evident in the church, their profound unity was the foundation of the life of the church. He encourages the Christians to make every effort to maintain the “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”:

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
(Ephesians 4:4-6)

Amidst all the diversity we encounter within the church — and within many of our local churches — this foundation stone of unity needs to be at the heart of the way we think about one another, and the way we relate to one another. We are much more united than we are diverse.

Diversity is also a gift from God

But as well as celebrating unity, we read:

“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”
(Ephesians 4:7)

Despite our fundamental unity, there is incredible diversity within the Body of Christ, by the specific creative design of God. Paul adjusts an Old Testament scripture in order to emphasise this:

Psalm 68:18 reads:

“When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you *received gifts* from people....”

In Ephesians 4:8, Paul cites the text like this:

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and *gave gifts* to his people.”

It was quite normal for a conquering king to *receive* tributes and gifts from a people he has conquered, but our conquering king Jesus, now he is ascended, *gives* gifts to people. And verse 10 tells us why: Jesus ascended “*in order to fill the whole universe*”.

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 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.”
(Ephesians 4:11-13)

Diversity has a purpose

In other words, the gift of the fivefold ministries has something to do with “filling the whole universe” with the presence of Christ. As far beyond our imagination as that may be, this is what the apostle Paul was envisaging here.

The fivefold ministries, which are a gift of the ascended Jesus to his church, are part of God's design plan to do two massive things:

- to equip all of God's people for their incredibly diverse ministry,
- to fill the universe with the presence of Christ.

We will consider in a moment how these ministries work in the Body of Christ. But it is worth stopping here for a moment, and asking ourselves whether we have really understood the vast purposes that God has for his church, and ask ourselves whether our vision for the church is a rather shrunken view? Often it has more to do with the needs of the people who are part of the church than God's ultimate intention for his world. Yes, we are here to be salt and light in a confused and broken world, but have we ever really faced up to the huge call that there is on the church to fill everything, everywhere with the presence of Christ? How can we accomplish that, and how can we be equipped to accomplish it?

Why does God want diverse leadership in the local church?

If "filling the universe with the presence of Christ" is part of our vital task as the church, and it is based on the variety of ministries that God puts in the church, we need to ask ourselves if we have properly understood these ministries, and whether we have really followed through thoroughly how to develop leadership in our churches. Many churches still have a rather singular form of leadership, a priest, vicar, or pastor; and even where churches develop leadership teams, there is often not the plurality or variety of ministries that these verses in Ephesians 4 talk about. Unsurprisingly, therefore, we often see local

churches failing to take their full place in “filling everything with the presence of Christ”. Our local churches are still church “bubbles”, ministering to the saints (the people of God), but largely getting on with their own life. We definitely do not see frequently enough all of God’s people equipped for their ministry. Indeed, in many churches I visit, leaders seem to have a common complaint: 80% of the work in the church is done, on average, by 20% of the people. If that is the case in so many churches, it seems, from this scripture, not to be an accusation about the general inadequate commitment of God’s people, but should beg the question whether our leadership models are themselves inadequate, and not producing the right sort of fruit?

We must ask ourselves serious questions. This booklet is written mainly for leaders to examine what we are doing, and to suggest that there may be a better way of doing things. If leaders don’t ask themselves tough questions about what they are doing, they will never improve their fruitfulness. And then, they blame the lack of growth, or lack of success, on the spiritual climate where they are, or on enemy action foiling their work for God’s Kingdom.

Questions for reflection

1. How much have I properly considered God's big plans for his church worldwide? Is there a disconnect between the big plan that we see someone like the apostle Paul had, and our own vision for our local church? Am I effectively thinking far too small? How might God want to upgrade my thinking?
2. How effective am I in seeing all of God's people released and functioning in their gifts and ministries? Do I have lots of passengers, rather than crew, on the good ship Church? How can I encourage people to enter into their calling?
3. How do our established and/or developing ministry team equip the whole congregation for service? Are there any areas that are assumed to be reserved for a chosen few? If so, how can we change our perspective on these?
4. *For group discussion:* Which of the Ephesians 4 ministries seems to be lacking among our leadership team? Where do we see these gifts emerging that can be encouraged?

Pray

Pray for God to give you fresh vision to see your church as He sees them!

Chapter 3: Equipping God's people to function

Fivefold ministries train and develop others

Ephesians 4:11-12 says:

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service...”

The clearly stated reason for which Christ gives gifts of ministry to his church is to equip God's people for their ministry. He does not put different ministries in the Body of Christ to dazzle the Body of Christ with their ministry, but to get God's people functioning in what God is calling each individual to do. Just as Jesus trained up and sent out the twelve disciples to engage in ministry (Luke 9) and then sent out another 72 “others” to engage in their ministry (Luke 10), and later sent out his apostles after Pentecost, and then called others (e.g. Paul,

Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Epaphroditus, etc.), Christ's great design plan for his world is to fill it with disciples who are engaged in ministry for his Kingdom. He never envisaged an "ordained" or specialist ministry, but rather that each disciple should become able to minister for Christ in some way. It is one of the tragedies of the church that, often, paid or full-time (although this is not a biblical term) ministry ends up doing most of the work in the church, thus rendering a large part of the church unemployed.

The words of this phrase "to equip God's people for works of service" (in Greek: *pros ton katartismon ton hagon eis ergon diaconias*) have some interesting parallel uses in the New Testament. The word for equip (*katartizo*) is the same word used for the disciples when Jesus called them: they were "preparing" their nets. In other words, they were fixing them, and getting them ready for their proper function. Nets with large holes in them cannot be useful for their task. Neither can people who have gifting in them be used for their predestined task until they are rid of the "holes" in their character or personality which will stop them functioning effectively. To put things crudely, the purpose of these fivefold ministries is to "fix/prepare God's people so that they can perform their God-assigned function".

Equally, the word "*diaconia*" is the word used in Acts 6 to describe the service of the apostles, as they engage in prayer and teaching the word, and to describe the service of those who are looking after the Greek-speaking widows in the church in Jerusalem. The interesting thing about that passage is that both serving at tables and prayer and preaching the word is called "*diaconia*". And the point here is that there are lots of different types of service, one not more important than another; everyone has a "service" or "function".

Indeed, Ephesians 4:16 summarises how the Body of Christ works:

“From him [i.e. Christ] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, *as each part does its work.*”

In this verse we see three vital aspects of the correct functioning of the Body of Christ, the church: they are,

1. direction from the Head, Christ
2. good connection with the rest of the Body
3. every part functioning as it should

The Body of Christ is seeking to hear all that Christ says, and to be obedient to him, wants to be well related to the rest of the Body in community, and is looking to every part of the Body to function as it should, according to the diverse gifts that God has put in it.

I want to underline as best I can the importance of this issue of leadership in the Body of Christ or the church being there to equip God’s people for their ministry. In my view, it seems that we often live with inadequate models of church, without properly tackling the systemic reasons for which things are not working properly, or setting ourselves goals for getting the Body of Christ functioning better.

Leadership opens the way for others

A parable of Jesus that has come to have a lot of meaning for me is recounted in Matthew 20:1-16.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they

expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

"But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Jesus makes clear that this is a "Kingdom" parable. When God is allowed to be King, certain behaviour prevails, and certain values are to be aimed at. The thrust of the parable is clear. God wants every person to feel a sense of value, to be workers in his vineyard, and he wants to extend grace to all. Clearly the religious people find the extension of God's grace so generous as to be offensive. But God is determined to show grace to all, and it's his privilege to do so, as a God of grace. But there is more than this to the parable.

Several years ago, I was walking down a large wide street in Shymkent, Kazakhstan with a friend of mine. It was my first visit to the city, but he was much more familiar with the setting. Suddenly to the left of us, I saw a huge grassy bank, with hundreds of people sitting there. I said to my friend, "What are they all doing?" He encouraged me to watch, and soon it all became clear. As we stood there, a car would drive up, and the

driver would get out to talk to a handful of people. As he would get out of his car, all heads would go up with hope and expectancy. He would negotiate a day's work, or a week's work with a handful of people, and off they would go in his car for their work. As the car would drive off, the heads of those left by the side of the road would go down in palpable depression! No work, no money, and no food for them or their families, and no value for these poor individuals who were left idly sitting on that grassy bank.

I couldn't help but think of this parable of the kingdom in Matthew 20. It suddenly took on much more significance than ever before. This wasn't just about grace and forgiveness coming to people who were lost and hopeless: it was about value and hope coming to people who had none because *suddenly they had found value and function!* Salvation coming to people is not just about finding grace and forgiveness from God in a religious sense, but it is about finding they have purpose, value to God, and gifts that can be used for his glory in the practical service of others. The dignity of having gifts that can be used to serve Christ and also extend his kingdom is immense.

Is God's kingdom really manifest in our local church?

So, let's think about the church. Is it not often the case that we see people saved and forgiven, and yet still non-functional in the life and mission of the church? Some are doing lots of the work, some are taking initiative, but many are still standing idle waiting to be employed and find their value. I started to see that there was an even greater imperative than just seeing people saved and forgiven (although that is of major importance!); it was to see people discover their gifts, find their usefulness to Christ and people in Christ's world, and therefore discover fresh dignity and value.

Which brings us back to Ephesians 4. The ascended Christ puts ministries into the church to help all of God's people function as they should, to "fix" God's people so that they work. And the task of leadership is to keep going out to those who have not yet discovered their gifts and their value, and to help them discover those gifts and function for God's glory. Indeed, what I saw was that those in the parable who get up at 6 am and 9 am are the "self-starters" in the church – probably those who are already "natural" leaders. But there are many in our churches who are not "natural" leaders or self-starters, and indeed, don't know how to function. And the mark of good leadership is not brilliant administration, or impressive teaching, or being hi-tech and creative in our worship events, but rather helping everyone to find their function and value.

Thinking more creatively?

Often this is simply a matter of helping people find creative ways in which they can function, and not write themselves off.

My wife, Lorraine, and I had been asked to go with a team and spend a few days with a church that seemed slightly "stuck". They had not grown for some years, and desperately wanted to reach out more effectively. One person we met early on in our visit, was a dear lady in her mid-fifties, who seemed a bit timid. As we talked to her (and she seemed a bit reluctant to talk to us at first, presumably finding the whole process a bit intimidating), it was clear that she did not feel she served any great purpose in the church, and that her gifts were not important. Perhaps she was the appendix in the Body of Christ! Not serving a really useful purpose, but causing pain at various times? We desperately tried to find some way in to help her see that everyone had something to give, and some part to play, but she was unconvinced. In the end, we asked, "So is there any

way you would like to help anyone around you, or anyone you have a heart for?" To which she responded, "Well, here I am in my mid-fifties, divorced against my will, which I never expected. And I've been through such pain these last few years. If I could find some way of helping others like me, who end up going through this sort of pain, I would really like to!" This seemed to be a crack of light into her situation. We asked whether there were others like her in the church, and she could think of two. We encouraged her to get together with them, and simply pray about whether there was anything they could think of doing for other people who were experiencing similar challenges.

We revisited that church a few months later again, and this dear lady bounded up to us. She had done what we had suggested. She had got together with the two other divorced people in her church, and they had prayed together about what they could do. They decided to attend a divorce recovery course that they had heard of, and then felt that they had enough both Christians and non-Christian friends for whom they could run something similar, and were just about to launch out into this "service" – an exciting course to help people recover from a life situation that risked paralysing them! They were excited, filled with faith, and the sense of value that they were finding was tangible. And all it took was a bit of creative thinking.

I think leaders need constantly to be talking with people in the church, in order to help those who feel they have not much value somehow to find it. It takes time, some creativity, and some persistence, but the Kingdom grows as we do it!

Questions for reflection

1. As a leader, do I tend to work more with the self-starters than the slow starters? If so, how can I change that?
2. As a leader, do I spend enough time trying to find out what is really in people's hearts, and how they might want to function in the church? How can I ensure I promote personal growth in people's own calling rather than seek to fill service "slots"?
3. What space and support do I currently give to personal and creative initiatives? How could I increase opportunities for people with vision to try new things?
4. *For group discussion:* How can we encourage one another to think creatively and open the way for others?

Pray

Call to mind some of those who are 'inactive' in your church community. Ask God if there is anything He wants to reveal to equip them to function in his body!

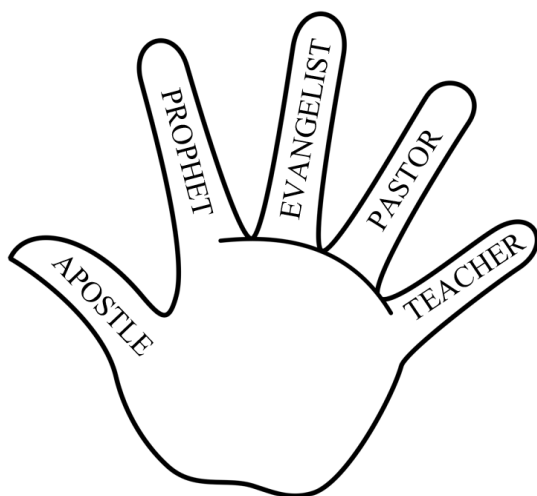
Chapter 4: Developing a diverse team

So, God gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to equip all of God's people for their life of service in God's Kingdom. As we have said, the ultimate goal of what are often called fivefold ministries is to equip ordinary people who have come to know Christ to do extraordinary things in Christ's service. I propose simply to summarise in this chapter the various ministries outlined in Ephesians 4, and then describe each in much more detail in subsequent chapters, and suggest how we can go about training and developing them.

The team as a hand

One well-used illustration of the fivefold ministries is that of a human hand. (I confess that I don't even know who used the picture originally!) But it is quite helpful. The thumb is seen as a picture of the apostolic ministry, which somehow helps all the others to function – a co-ordinating ministry. The second finger, like the prophetic ministry, points the way. The third finger

protrudes more than the others, and is like the evangelist, who “sticks out” into the world. The fourth finger carries the wedding ring, which speaks of covenant love, which the genuine pastor (I mean those who have a real pastoring gift, not simply those who carry a title of ‘Pastor’) promotes most strongly in the church. And the fifth finger, like the teaching gift, definitely gets in your ear!



We shall go into the role and function of each of these fivefold gifts separately, and then talk about how the gifts operate in team.

Apostles

Apostles were obviously crucial in their role of establishing and fathering churches.

Apostles were not the only ones starting churches, of course. Philip (an evangelist) was active in preaching the gospel in Samaria, and saw signs and miracles happen there, and

obviously had gathered a number of believers together, but Peter and John clearly established the church through an impartation of the Holy Spirit. And indeed, we assume that the Ethiopian official whom Philip encountered also started churches in Ethiopia, and people from Rome who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost presumably returned and started the church in Rome.

The apostles were key in directing the churches' life in Acts, alongside the elders appointed in each local church. Significant changes in, and questions about, how the church went about their developing ministry always came back to the apostles. Undoubtedly apostles equip others to find their place in the growth and expansion of the church, have building ministries which build people into the life of the church, and keep them moving in a vision for God's Kingdom.

Prophets

The ministry of prophets was well known in the history of the Jewish people as people who heard clear messages from God and spoke directly for God into different situations in the journey of God's people. Their ministry was a mix of *forthtelling* and *foretelling*. Some of their ministry addressed issues in the current day, and spoke the word of God into those situations – forthtelling – while other prophetic ministry was much more predictive in nature, and declared God's promises for the future – foretelling.

Both types of prophet are in evidence in the New Testament. Agabus is clearly a *predictive* prophet. In Acts 11, he prophesies a famine in the entire Roman world, which led to an offering being taken for the Jerusalem church; he later prophesies Paul's imprisonment. Judas and Silas were also seen as "*forthtelling*"

prophets (Acts 15:32), who “encouraged and strengthened the believers”. The *equipping* prophet is always seeking to help God’s people hear what God is saying to them and to the church as a whole, and to train up others to develop their ability to hear God, and speak God’s word to others. He equips others for their ministry.

Evangelists

Evangelists help the church grow through seeing people come to faith in Jesus and join the church. They are vital to the Body of Christ, although they can often feel on the “edge” of the church community, by and large because they are doorways into the church. Theirs is a ministry of multiplication. Acts 21:8 describes Philip as an evangelist who had four daughters who were prophetesses. Their ministry is often accompanied by miracles, healings and deliverance. The equipping evangelist wants to help God’s people be fruitful, and wants to strengthen them in faith and courage that they can also lead others to Christ, and indeed, can see the power of God come into other people’s lives. There are, of course, many different types of evangelists, just as there are different types of prophets: I will outline more of this in a later chapter.

Pastors and teachers

The way that the passage is written in Ephesians 4:11 shows that the ministry of shepherds (the true meaning of the word pastor) and teachers are closely linked. They help the church grow through pastoral care and teaching of the word. Equipping ministry in this realm helps strengthen God’s people to press strongly into their relationship with Christ, and to understand the word of God and how to build on it, and will develop others

who can care for others and teach others in their following of Christ.

There is some variety of perspective amongst commentators as to whether these are two separate ministries or one ministry with a dual emphasis. I will deal with these two ministries in separate chapters, because my own conviction is that they need to be recognised separately.

While I have seen some “shepherds” who also have good teaching gifts, I have also worked with pure shepherds who do not excel as teachers, since they are primarily people persons. Likewise, I have worked with teachers who are not great carers for people, since they are often black and white in the way they look at and apply God’s word, and therefore are often felt not to be very pastoral. The ministry of the teacher focuses on the word of God, what the Bible is saying, and what it teaches us about the way we should live as God’s people. The teacher is more concerned with principles, and the shepherd more concerned with people. There is, of course, considerable crossover between the two, but distinctions still exist.

Gift and ministry mix

Although many people are a mix of one or two of these different giftings and ministries, most of those called to ministry in the church are strong in some, and lacking in others of them. This is one reason an individual minister (the pastor, the vicar, or the minister) is insufficient to lead a local church alone, and underlines why local churches need access to other types of ministry to develop the diversity of people in their churches.

I come back to what I said in the foreword of this book. I realised many years ago that, if the church I was leading was limited to me and my gifts, they were in trouble! The church

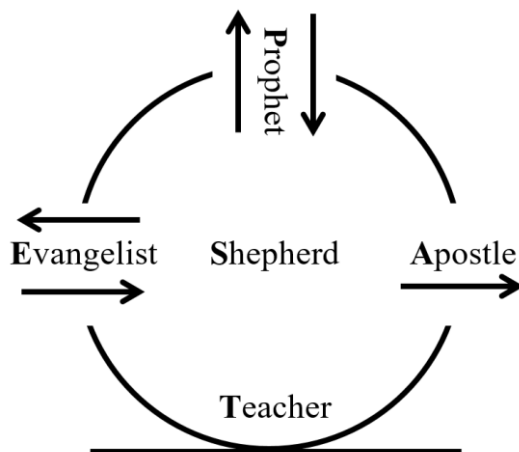
would be fine, so long as it was made up of people just like me – they would be happy in the main. But if there were people who were not like me, who had other giftings, they would feel very deprived, and very dissatisfied indeed. Indeed, let's just suppose that the ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4 each made up 20% of the total of ministries in the Body of Christ. So, let's say 20% are apostles, 20% prophets, 20% evangelists, 20% pastors and 20% teachers. If I, as a leader, am mainly a teacher, I will satisfy and be able to develop 20% of the people. The rest of the people will either remain in the church largely dissatisfied and undeveloped in their gifts, or else they will move on to a church where the leader pleases them better, and is more akin to who they are in their gifting. Indeed, I suspect that this is largely what happens in the church at large. Either people stay attending a church led by someone who is not really similar to them in terms of their gifting, or else they move on to another church led by someone who is more akin to their own gifting. This is not simply a question of whether we are like the leader, or even whether we like the leader, but whether we feel that they are developing us for the ministry that Jesus is calling us to fulfil. Is this why we see so much church-hopping from the saints? Does it come more from boredom than a bad heart? Perhaps they are not really being equipped for their ministry as they should be?

If this why people keep moving churches, then all we do is recycle church members, rather than develop teams of leaders and ministries who can lead growing churches that satisfy, develop and train all sorts of differently gifted people.

So, the time may have come to raise the bar, in terms of leadership in our churches. How, then, can we raise up leadership teams that include all of the necessary giftings to equip all of the gifted people in our congregations?

Five gifts and the church community

I first came across this way of visualising what some call the 'APEST' gifts – Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd and Teacher – when I was pointed to a blog post³. It helpfully, in my view, draws out how the 5 gifts play their part in helping God's the church be all that he wants it to be.



The circle represents the church.

The 'APE' gifts function in an outward-facing way on the edge of the community:

- Apostles are pioneers who love to move Jesus's movement forward. They want to extend and take new ground. They are risk takers who are adaptive, innovative and problem-solvers. They grasp core values and replicate them in the people they send out. They ask, "Where next?"

³ <http://5qcentral.com/diagramming-5q>

- Prophets help the community stay aligned to God. They are attuned to Holy Spirit's leading; they challenge injustice and call for a high moral standard within the Body. They ask, "What does God think?"
- Evangelists love inviting others into community. Their heart is to make the circle bigger by recruiting others. They are enthusiastic promoters and storytellers. They are the most likely to see those who are left out and welcome them in. They are infectious communicators of the gospel message and call for a personal response to the redemption of Christ. At the same time, evangelists are often good at leading Christians out into the world for witness, so they provide a two way bridge: for non-Christians into the church, and for Christians out of the church for friendship and witness with non-Christians.

The other two gifts ('ST') are more inward facing to promote health and stability within the community:

- Shepherds (Pastors) care for the health of the community. They nurture, support and promote unity. They are the glue that holds a diverse community together through compassionate care and encouragement. They seek to reconcile and reunite parts that naturally tend to divide.
- Teachers keep us biblically grounded. They understand God's word and know how to explain it in a way that impacts others. They help systematize our organizations and create traditions so we can leave a legacy for the next generation.

Some of the challenges of the five gifts in team!

There are, of course, irritations as well as joys in having differently gifted people working together in team. There is a certain amount of “rubbing up” against one another. Prophetic people want truth, life and honesty, calling a spade a spade, and can sometimes be rather blunt. Apostolic people like things clear, strategic and well defined, and can sometimes “box in” other giftings. For that matter, evangelists can be enormously pragmatic and unprincipled, so long as people come to Christ, while teachers hate the pragmatic sloppiness that can be found in others. The pastor just wants everyone to be happy, and tries desperately to avoid conflict.

The following chart helps us to see and define a bit the different gifts, and some of their strengths and weaknesses. Like all such charts it is perhaps an over-simplification, but gives us a reasonable framework!

Gift	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Getting the best from them
(A) Apostle	<p>Literally means ‘sent one’ - essentially missional and developmental</p> <p>Planting and fathering churches</p> <p><i>A pioneering gift – extending, planting, networking, going</i></p> <p><i>A foundational gift – concerned for health, integration, reproduction of core DNA</i></p> <p>Often strategist and team leader</p>	<p>Visionary and strategic thinking</p> <p>Harmonising other gifts</p> <p>Experimental and risk taking</p>	<p>Can move onto new challenges too quickly</p> <p>Can see discipleship primarily for growth and multiplication</p> <p>Can be seen as overly strategic by Prophet and Evangelist gifts at expense of people or God’s leading</p> <p>Can be seen as autocratic</p>	<p>Let them explain their big ideas, without being concerned too early about individuals (a concern for the Shepherd) or detail (a concern for the Teacher)</p>
(P) Prophet	<p>Concerned with loyalty and faithfulness to God</p> <p>They ask, “What is God saying now?”</p> <p>Living a life consistent with the covenant – simple, authentic, justice, holiness</p>	<p>Asking “What is God saying?”</p> <p>Sensitive to the Holy Spirit</p> <p>Purist</p>	<p>Gets bored with church</p> <p>Not always easy in team</p> <p>Can be sharp and lack patience for people</p> <p>Insecure and prone to rejection</p> <p>Need space to hear God</p>	<p>Give them space to hear God</p> <p>Be relational – they need to feel loved</p> <p>Particular tensions with Shepherds and Teachers</p>

Gift	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses	Getting the best from them
(E) Evangelist	<p>Passion: Proclamation of the good news</p> <p>Concerned with people outside of the church</p>	<p>Keeping us focused on the main thing - the gospel!</p> <p>Constantly looking for new people</p> <p>Optimistic</p>	<p>Gets bored with church</p> <p>Not always easy in team</p> <p>Narrow perspective, 'simple gospel' rather than disciple-making</p>	<p>Give them space to be 'on the edge' and not always at meetings</p> <p>Challenge hard when necessary</p> <p>Particular tensions with Shepherds and Teachers</p>
(S) Shepherd (Pastor)	<p>Passion: Maintaining and developing healthy community and enriching relationships, forming 'saintly' people and loving community</p>	<p>Great team players and community-builders</p> <p>Individuals feel cared for and appreciated</p>	<p>Can see discipleship primarily for spiritual formation</p> <p>Can lack mission and vision</p> <p>Can react to strategy and systems</p>	<p>Need to hear a heart for individuals, otherwise will challenge change or grand new ideas</p>
(T) Teacher	<p>They ask, "What is right?", "What does the Bible say?"</p> <p>Concerned to bring an orderly and systematic understanding to the church</p>	<p>Understanding</p> <p>Focus on truth</p>	<p>Can be dogmatic and over-analytical (want to be right/accurate)</p> <p>Can control through ideas</p> <p>Can see discipleship primarily as education</p>	<p>Need time to process change, to allow their paradigms and beliefs to catch up</p>

Every team will need to take time to appreciate, value and receive the gifts of other members of the team, appreciate their strengths, and find grace for their weaknesses. This will take honest communication and good leadership from the apostolic leader.

Going back to my Baptist roots, I now see that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers has a fault-line in it. That is, it leads people to conclude that anyone may minister in any way in the Body of Christ. This is unhelpful. People need to understand which gifts God has given them. And then, they still need training in how to minister in the gifting that they have, how to helpfully share the revelation that they have, how to care for God's people with sensitivity, etc. So training and equipping God's people is essential.

Questions for reflection

1. How much do we see all five ministries in operation in our church? Which are really strong in our church, and which much weaker? What actions do we need to take to improve the balance of different giftings?
2. Do we need to help people change their expectations of which giftings are employed by ministries within the church? How can we do that?
3. What training and support are we providing for people who want to develop a particular gifting?
4. *For group discussion:* How mature is our understanding of one another's giftings? How can we get the best from one another through greater understanding?

Pray

Take time to thank God for diverse gifts, especially those which are most different to yours. Ask God to give you his perspective on those in your church and team who have different giftings.

Chapter 5: Change the leaders!

Without doubt, the first thing that will need to change if we are to change the model of leadership in our churches is the “number one” leader!

It became very clear to me as a young church leader many years ago, that if I were going to develop an effective team, then the first person who needed to change was not others, but me. I needed not to be the superstar myself, determined to try to dazzle everyone with my spiritual giftedness, but I needed to become an enabler and releaser of others in their gifting. I needed to create space for others to move and function. I needed to develop an atmosphere where others were appreciated as much in their gifting as me in mine. A very good book about this is *Culture of Honour* by Danny Silk.

So, I, the team leader, needed to change!

Changing the leader

It is John Maxwell, the leadership guru, who said that if we want an organisation to change, we needed to change the leader.

Now often that may mean that there needs to be a change of the main leader, i.e., one leader needs to go, and another needs appointing. That issue has to be faced in churches sometimes.

I remember when I had asked someone (let's call him James) who had been a very good local elder alongside me and a team of elders to lead a church in another place. James was ready to face the challenge and accepted the call to go. But it didn't work. It became clear that while he was a really good elder working alongside someone else who was a visionary leader, on his own, James lost momentum, and the whole church we had asked him to lead was suffering. In the end, I went to him and apologised. I apologised that I had pushed him beyond his sphere of grace, and suggested that he needed another visionary to move in and lead the team in that church instead of him. I was genuinely sorry, because my desire to advance him had actually bent him out of shape, both personality and gifting wise. Fortunately, he was relieved to hear my apology, and happy to relinquish the leadership position to someone else. Sometimes, we need to literally change the leader to resolve the problem we were facing. And this next change worked brilliantly for all.

So occasionally, we do need to grasp the nettle, and change the one who is leading the team or church. This principle was expounded by Laurence J Peter, when he suggested that, in most organisations, people rose to their "level of incompetence". And then they stayed there, or were transferred sideways, since there was nowhere else for them to go. While this theory was, in origin, developed by Peter as a bit of a satire; it later was taken seriously by quite a lot of organisations, and was enshrined in a

book entitled “The Peter Principle” by Dr Peter and Raymond Hull.

I want to suggest that sometimes, we may literally need to change the leader of a church, because we have the wrongly gifted person leading! While this is rarely an easy thing to do, as it may lead to someone being “dis-appointed”, it may still be a necessity for the church or organisation, because the necessary changes cannot be made otherwise.

This is one very good reason for churches to belong to a wider family of churches, because these changes cannot be made apart from the input of trusted leaders and ministries outside of the local church. Even then, external ministries may be too supportive of local leaders already in place, and may themselves duck the issue of making the necessary changes. But I think that the apostle Paul might well have taken the necessary action in such situations, and so should apostolic ministry in the church today!

The leader changing

However, I also think that it is possible to challenge local leaders on the need to change the way that they lead, and the way that they think, so that the phrase “change the leader” may have other implications. I want to suggest that there are several ways that a church leader may be encouraged to change without having to relinquish their post of leadership!

Some leaders need to be encouraged to stop managing, and actually to lead! One of the frustrations we encounter is when leaders fail to lead, but end up managing, trying to please everyone, take account of every single view, instead of leading with vision and faith. Sometimes, leaders do not realise that they are far too timid, and therefore conduct their leadership

with a significant dose of “fear of man”! Proverbs 29:25 says: “The fear of man will prove to be a snare.” And so it is. It stops us advancing boldly, leading in faith. I remember, at a time when I was leading a whole group of churches, that we were trying to debate whether to embark or not on a specific project (which I felt was what we should do!), but in order to be fair-minded, I was trying to listen to all, and allow everyone a fair say. Eventually, in a leaders’ meeting, one of my leaders said: “For goodness’ sake, Steve, if you feel that you have heard God, please lead us with faith and confidence!” That released me significantly to lead with faith – but he had detected my “niceness” and “paralysis”!

There are leaders who like managing detail, and therefore get stuck in it! Detail is essentially a matter for managers, not a matter for leaders. Leaders are focussed on vision, the big picture, where we are going long-term, and do not get bogged down in detail. They want to motivate people, but not manage them. Some leaders have an eye on vision, but still get bogged down in detail. They need encouraging to keep the main thing the main thing, and to **stop** managing (or even micro-managing).

There are leaders who are basically so pastoral that they will not move on to progress issues until they are sure that everyone is with them. This is often a strategy of the enemy to delay us or stop us completely from advancing. There are always voices in our ear which will stop us moving forward. Often, they are our friends! That makes it worse. They are not always wrong in trying to bring us caution, because they make us think of things that visionary leaders otherwise would not properly consider, but they should not make us hesitate for too long – they should make us consider things we have not properly considered, and that is all!

Some leaders will also run out of faith at certain points. This may be their natural tendency. They need to have their focus changed constantly to fix their eyes on Jesus, and on a God who constantly provides for them. This is an ongoing input, which is why most pastors need pastors themselves. We get locked into our own perspectives, and need someone else to break us out of them. Most local church leaders are not automatically filled with faith, and one reason for that is that they see the realities of who people are, and what situations confront us only too well.

So, leaders need changing, in all sorts of ways. We all do. There is no shame in this. Just a certain teachability, humility and suppleness!

Changing the team

Equally, others, in their regard for the team leader, need to change. Most of the people in the church are there because they appreciate the security and anointing that the team leader offers to them. They like the team leader. They would not be there, otherwise! But making room for other giftings is risky. If we are going to allow a prophet, or an evangelist, to function, we might feel that we are taking a risk. Can we trust someone with prophetic leanings, who might say things that might not be strictly justifiable biblically, that might sound a bit tenuous, or that might promise things that sound a bit imaginative, and overly faith-filled? Or if other giftings like the evangelist, who will essentially be risky, and sometimes not so sound biblically, were to be developed, would this be acceptable, when I, as a teacher and therefore essentially biblically trustworthy, had previously been the best model?

Or let us suppose that I have an apostolic and big picture view of things, and need to make room for the pastor/teacher on a

local level, who is primarily concerned about building people up locally, who are people going to trust? What if my apostolic vision is constantly sending people out, when a local pastor and teacher wants to build people up? How do we live with this tension?

The team leader needs to change to make room for others. Likewise, the team members need to change in their willingness to trust the giftings and perspectives of others. And, the church members need to change to hear the perspectives of different ones, and not feel that one is better than the other, just that they are different from the others and complementary.

Equally, others will need to step up in their gifting, and not think that their perspective is somehow less important than others. There is a bar to be raised for everyone, a maturity to be grasped by all, and a growth to be embraced by each gifting and ministry.

Questions for reflection

1. What are the main areas in which my church needs to see change? Do I have confidence this can be accomplished by the current main leader? How might they need to change for this to be possible?
2. Are we ensuring that all giftings are equally heard and valued? Where we are lacking in one or more ministries, how might the team need to change to make room for other giftings?
3. What are the challenges that we might face in envisaging these changes? How can we overcome them?
4. (For Groups) What types of change does our team find it harder to embrace (collective blind spots)?

Pray

Pray for God's wisdom as you consider these changes.

Chapter 6:

Thinking and being apostolic

I want to suggest that apostolic ministry is a major change in our way of thinking about the church, and not just a small change in approach to leadership. If we ask ourselves, “What does it mean to be apostolic?”, the answer is: the apostolic is a huge change in our understanding and expectation! And when I talk about “thinking apostolically”, I am not just talking about apostles, although the apostles will set the tone of the ministry team. It is vital for prophets to “think apostolically”, and evangelists to “think apostolically”, and likewise pastors and teachers. All of these ministries make up the “apostolic team” and have the same vision of Christ’s apostolic church. Prophets are vital in encouraging God’s people forward into laying hold of Christ’s apostolic mission in the earth and being part of it. Evangelists are vital in equipping God’s people to be confidently missional in their day-to-day lives. Pastors are vital in bringing healing to God’s people and “fixing God’s people so that they function properly” (see chapter 2). Teachers are essential in teaching God’s people about the nature and expansion of God’s kingdom

in the earth, and how we see that expansion biblically. For that matter, administrators are vital to any team in understanding the apostolic heart of God, and seeking to administrate with a big vision in their hearts!

Thinking apostolically

Thinking apostolically is *a whole new way of thinking big*. The apostle Paul is always pressing out for more, and always thinking bigger. In Romans 1:1-16, Paul outlines how he is longing to visit Rome. There is little doubt that Paul wants to visit Rome because Rome is the most influential city of the Roman Empire. Yet, he says that he longs to visit Rome because he wants to impart some spiritual gift. He maintains that he has always longed to come to Rome, and has been prevented for various reasons, but he feels a sense of obligation to Jews and non-Jews, to the clever and the not-so-clever. He was eager to preach in Rome, because he recognises that the gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who will dare to believe! He wants to see the city of Rome, the hub of the Roman Empire, influenced by the gospel message.

But Rome is not the limit of his vision. In Romans 15:14-33, Paul clarifies that he is a minister to non-Jews, and that he wants to preach from Jerusalem to Illyricum, from Macedonia to Achaia, and then to Rome and also on to Spain. Why does he want to go to Spain? Because Spain is the furthest border of the known world in Paul's day. If one talks of the uttermost parts, or the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) then we are talking about going to Spain!

Apostolic ministry is always pressing out for more. That's what apostolic thinking is always about. How can we go further?

How can we see more territory gained for Christ? How can we reach unreached peoples for Christ?

Apostolic ministry is not content with ground that we have already won for Christ. It is not simply a matter of managing better the vision and the territory we have already taken. We are constantly asking: how can we take more territory for Jesus? How can we penetrate and influence society more? How can we grow and influence the villages, towns and cities where God has planted us more effectively? How can we see lost people come to Christ?

The heroes of the faith who are listed in Hebrews chapter 11 are commended because they see things that are invisible.

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

(Hebrews 11:1)

This is the substance of Paul’s apostolic thinking and imagination. He is always pressing out for more. And he understands that the commission to go to the ends of the earth is not an option, it’s an apostolic compulsion and obsession. Apostles are not managers, but leaders, pioneers, faith developers, entrepreneurs, seeing opportunities where others see resistance and limits. There is more to apostolic thinking than this, for sure, but it starts here, at least according to Romans 1 and Romans 15!

Apostolic personality – fatherhood

Although lots of people today want to see apostolic ministry as strategic and looking outwards, the apostle Paul encourages those who connect with him to see it as more than that.

1 Corinthians 4 outlines how Paul sees his apostleship. He feels

weak, foolish, lacking in provision, the scum of the earth, honoured by no-one. At the same time, he is a father to the church in Corinth, and what's more, to Timothy, his spiritual son.

“I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.”

(1 Corinthians 4:14-17)

He has the right to speak into the church in Corinth because he established it, and also fathered the believers there. He sees the thrust of his ministry as being rooted in love and a gentle spirit, not harsh discipline. Equally, he sees his mentoring of younger leaders as rooted in fatherhood:

“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel...”

(Philippians 2:19ff)

Clearly Paul sees himself as a father to the young Timothy, a spiritual son. And he trusts Timothy, because he is a genuine son.

Likewise, we read in 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-11:

“Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. [...] For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

This is the language of relationship, motherhood and fatherhood. Apostleship is not simply strategic leadership, but a relationship of care and encouragement. Fatherhood is about commitment, involvement, feeling responsible for people. You are not just accomplishing a task, you are loving people, carrying them in your heart, feeling the care of people and churches.

The apostle Paul talks about the hardships and challenges of his apostolic calling. He talks about his imprisonments, his floggings, his stoning, his shipwrecks, and various other dangers he has fallen into. He testifies times of hunger, going without sleep, being cold. *“Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches”* (2 Corinthians 11:28). The apostle has big vision, but he also has a big heart.

In talking about fatherhood, there are inevitable questions raised about whether there can be women apostles recognised in the life of the church. I will cover this later.

Apostolic ministry – thinking structurally

The Acts of the Apostles is the record of early apostolic ministry of the church that was born through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Some have suggested that the book of the Acts should be called “the Acts of the Holy Spirit”,

because it really is all about how the Holy Spirit led the church on its mission to spread the gospel and plant communities of God's people in different towns and cities. The Holy Spirit helped the church grow in the following three main ways:

- Spontaneous acts of the Holy Spirit in healing, deliverances, answers to prayer, release from prison, conversions, and visitations to people like Paul on the road to Damascus or Peter in the house of Cornelius.
- Structures of ministry and leadership in the church, such as the appointment of deacons, elders, the sending out of apostles from Antioch, etc.
- Dealing with challenges that arose in the context of the mission of the church, for example, when the gospel went to non-Jews. So what exactly is the gospel message for non-Jews? That sort of question had to be worked out properly, as in the debate in the Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts 15, which involved elders and apostles.

If anyone thought structurally, it was the apostle Paul. As a teacher immersed in the Old Testament scriptures, who was profoundly turned around by his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he had to re-think and re-formulate his understanding of Scripture.

The letter to the Christians in Ephesus summarises how he sees the church, as we have already noted. Paul outlines different ways in which he sees the church. He uses several pictures to summarise the life of the church:

- Ephesians 2:10 – The church is God's **work of art**, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. This is akin to what he

says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, when he calls us a “new creation”. Just as God created the world at the beginning of everything, he has now begun a new creation order in the church. We are a new creation, destined to do good works for God’s glory. The Clapham sect (Wilberforce and his friends) talked about “making goodness fashionable”, which is a great way of describing God’s purposes for his new creation in the church.

- Ephesians 2:19-22 – The church is God’s **household**, built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the chief cornerstone. As we are joined together, we become a holy temple in the Lord, a place where God lives by his Spirit. God’s house, where he lives, is a powerful picture of the church – it’s a holy dwelling-place!
- Ephesians 3:14 ff – The church is God’s **family**, which draws its being and identity from the Father. It’s a family that God wants to fill with his love, the love of Christ, which is vast and whose depths are unplumbable. God wants to show his glory in the church through a family who love one another deeply and powerfully.
- Ephesians 4 – The church is the **Body** of Christ, deeply united in a common life, with a common Spirit, and through a common Lord, but diversely gifted and empowered.
- Ephesians 5:23ff – The church is the **bride** of Christ, delightfully submitted to her Saviour and bridegroom in a spiritual marriage and covenant relationship.

- Ephesians 6:10ff – The church is the **army** of God, clothed in spiritual armour, battling in prayer.

All of these pictures provide clear ways to thinking about the church. They are not just pictures, either; they are new realities. The church needs to think of itself differently from the OT people of God. The family of God is not just in heaven, it is on earth; the Body of Christ is connected to the Risen Christ, and manifest on the earth.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I see church and mission with an apostolic perspective? What limits do I put on my thinking and praying? How can I look to expand my vision from what is to what could be?
2. How have I seen the apostle(s) I and my church connect with express their father's heart? How do I express fatherhood or motherhood towards those I am leading?
3. In thinking about the different pictures of the church, which are the ones I connect with most? And which ones do I find hardest to understand? What difference would it make to my church if we lived in the light of these?
4. *For group discussion:* What vision does our team have for kingdom expansion in our local area? In our nation? On an international scale? How can we work towards these?

Pray

Pray for your thinking to take on a more apostolic shape and that you would grow as a spiritual father or mother.

Chapter 7:

Apostolic perspectives

Apostolic ministry thinks about mission

If there is anything that apostolic teams think about non-stop, it is about mission. By mission, we obviously mean getting the gospel out wherever we are, on our doorstep, in our region, or further afield – in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. But mission is also thinking about the larger impact of the gospel of Christ on society around us.

So we want to touch those very close to us and just like us with the gospel, those who are relatively close and a bit like us with the gospel, and those who are quite distant with us and not very like us with the gospel. Apostles (and apostolic teams) understand, like the apostle Paul, that they are “*called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God*” (Romans 1:1). And, as Paul says in Romans 1:15-16:

“[...] I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the

gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

Frankly, this is the difference between people who, through history or habit, simply oversee churches, and true apostles. True apostles are always thinking: how can we make this church more fruitful, or how can we make these people more fruitful? Apostolic ministry is not just a question of church government, but of Kingdom growth.

So, as Paul says in Romans 15:

“So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.”
(15:19b-20)

“But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain.”
(15:23-24a)

What we hear in these words of Paul is his passion to take the gospel wherever he can. He wants to get to Spain, because, for the known world of that time, Spain is the uttermost ends of the earth!

Paul's concern is to get the gospel out wherever he can, in whatever way he can. As he says in 1 Corinthians 9:16-23:

“For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

True apostolic teams are orientated towards mission, and constantly ask themselves how they and their churches can be more effective and more fruitful. They are looking for what is not yet in place, pioneering in their thinking and their leadership. They are constantly pragmatic in their approach to reaching out to others. They have big vision, and pragmatic strategies.

One person who made a serious impact on me when I was a student was George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilisation. OM had only just been established when I heard George speak, but he clearly had a passion for nations, and was determined to mobilise lots of young people to be infected with the same missional bug. I heard him speak at one of our Salt & Light conferences twenty years later, and he was just as passionate about Christians being missional. And you only have to look at the OM website now to see the missional passion that infuses this whole movement, which has 3,300 workers in 110 nations or more. This is apostolic thinking!

Apostolic ministry is supernatural and dynamic

If apostolic ministry is going to be successful missionally, then it will need to have a supernatural dynamic. Although Paul is clearly a preacher and teacher, that is not the only feature of his ministry. He expects to see signs and wonders happen, as this is the ministry of Christ. Equally, his life and ministry show that he understood that there is a supernatural and spiritual warfare that he needs to engage in. See, for example:

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”
(1 Corinthians 2:4)

“I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God.”
(Romans 15:18-19)

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.”

(2 Corinthians 10:4)

“For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:4-5a)

And this is just a selection. Paul has an understanding that principalities and powers influence what is happening in the world, and sees that the Kingdom of God is taking ground from these dominant ruling authorities. Indeed, part of his understanding of what God is doing through the church is dethroning principalities and powers in the world. So, for example,

“His [God’s] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Ephesians 3:10-11)

So what Christ is building through his church has a supernatural purpose in showing that God’s plan of salvation, which God always intended to put into operation when the time was right, is completely effective in the church.

Fivefold ministries should all be passionate to see God move powerfully. One of our co-workers in France is a Baptist pastor – let’s call him Michel. He is a man of deep prayer, and an excellent Bible teacher. But during the week, you are just as

likely to find him on the streets of his town talking one-to-one to people in the streets, praying with them for God to touch them in some area of need. Many people have come to Christ in this way, and he has powerful testimonies of God healing people on the streets, and their lives being transformed by supernatural encounter.

Apostolic ministry requires apostolic prayer!

I cannot help but feel that this should go without saying, and yet, I have learnt over the years that sometimes we need to state the obvious, and remind people of the absolute foundations for life in Christ, and life in ministry.

I am impressed that Paul's apostolic prayers had their root in apostolic revelation – but for that matter, so did the prayers of Jesus!

- When Jesus taught his disciples about prayer, it wasn't small domesticated prayer, but big Kingdom prayers! The Lord's Prayer is born out of a revelation of the Kingdom coming on the earth!
- In John 17, when Jesus prays for his disciples, he clearly has a revelation of God's glory coming through his disciples' unity!
- In Ephesians 1, Paul has a huge revelation of all that God has done for his people, and prays that they will really understand all of that!
- In Ephesians 3, Paul sees a vision of the family of God, and prays that they will be filled hugely with the love of God, although that takes a big miracle to get hold of!

But there are other "big picture" prayers of the Bible:

- That the nations should be the inheritance of Jesus and his people. (Psalm 2:8)
- For the ending of barrenness, and a preparation for expansion. (Isaiah 54:1-17)
- That God will fill the earth with his glory. (Isaiah 2:1-5; Habakkuk 2:14)
- That God would send workers into his harvest. (Matthew 9:36-38)
- That civil government should be exercised to advance the work of Christ. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

In my mind, apostolically thinking leaders and churches will be praying for revival. They are always looking for something bigger, and, if they are genuinely looking for something bigger, they will be praying for something bigger.

Actually, the prayers that people pray will probably indicate what their real vision is!

Case Study: Ephesus

We looked earlier at the letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. I have come to really appreciate the story in Acts 19, which describes how Paul first visited this city, and saw a church started, and a city changed through the church in Ephesus. In other words, how do moves of God start and continue? (Was this where lots of Paul's revelation about the church was really born?) Here are the four main features of this story:

A move of God starts with one man taking a radical step of obedience. Paul walks into the city of Ephesus (where previously Apollos had taught rather inadequately about Jesus, only to be trained further by Priscilla and Aquila). Paul challenges the spiritual foundations of the disciples there, and

leads them into a full baptism of the Holy Spirit, and baptises them in the name of the Lord Jesus. An individual apostle lays good foundations for the church, which starts a move of God in the city. There is no alternative in lots of places where God wants to do something new, other than pioneers fearlessly pioneering something new for God!

A move of God continues with a group of disciples who continue a process of training. Paul worked first of all in the synagogue, training people for three months. When some of the synagogue believers resisted Paul's teaching, and things became too uncomfortable, he moved next door (I wonder what the synagogue leaders thought of that!) to the hall of Tyrannus, and continued a process of training and discipling for two years. A move of God can only be continued by people who really want it! This training was thorough, and foundational for the church. Ongoing moves of God will not continue without good discipling practices in the church.

A move of God brings clear deliverance from previous religious practices. We cannot lay new foundations in a place, without taking up the old ones. The old ones had been laid under the influence of businesspeople devoted to Artemis (in Greek) or Diana (in Latin), who were possibly akin to freemasons in the city (always a combination of business and religion). This led to clear conflict, but ultimately to penetration of city life.

This move of God led to the transformation of business and society! This was not just a religious conversion revival, but a revival in every area of society. This leads me to reflect that genuine apostolic impact will affect the whole of society, including education, business, the arts and the political sphere. This is beyond the brief of this particular book but we need apostles to be active in every arena within society.

Questions for reflection

1. How missional is my thinking as a church leader? Do I think of taking all areas of society for the kingdom? What areas do I need more faith or revelation for?
2. What foundations of discipleship am I laying? How have I seen those I am discipling change and mature?
3. What do my prayers reveal about my attitude to mission? How can I grow in my expectations to see God move powerfully?
4. *For groups discussion:* What do our team's investments in terms of time, resources and money reveal about our commitment to mission? How do we encourage each other to be praying for God to use us?

Pray

Pray for increased expectations to see God move in your area and family.

Chapter 8: Apostolic teams with resilience and hope

I don't feel I need to say much about this, except, once again, not to take anything for granted. The apostle Paul is very clear that apostolic ministry is constantly exercised in a state of conflict. If we are going to pioneer, we need not just mild strategic thinking, or a notion of being called and sent, but the resilience to live up to the call that we hear from God. So Paul says:

“But we have this treasure [the gospel of God's glory] in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to

death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in his mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."

(2 Corinthians 4:7-12)

Paul is aware of his frailty, but elsewhere is also confident in the resources he has in Christ Jesus:

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

(Philippians 4:11-13)

Apostolic character entails:

- Resilience – you have to keep going when you are tempted to give up
- Humility – you are not going to be universally popular
- Suffering – goes with the turf of serving Jesus
- Determination – constant pioneering means overcoming disappointment
- Not being deflected – if God has called you, you have abandoned the right to take the easy road

Apostolic hope involves:

- Having a determined understanding that God means to fill the earth with his glory
- Understanding that the means by which God fills the earth with his glory is first of all to plant communities of

his people (churches) who will start to fill their regions with his character and nature

- Believing that a better world is possible, as God's kingdom comes to it
- Commitment to Christ who is going to show himself as Lord of the Nations

Why do I emphasise apostolic resilience and hope so much? I sense that the church needs opening up to a bigger, more optimistic and positive way of thinking than it currently has in Europe or North America. Many of those with a prophetic gift and personality are frustrated by life in the church, because intuitively they feel that God wants his church to be much more positive, hopeful and confident about the future. Many evangelists step outside the church in order to run their own ministries. This is because they feel that there is not room for them within the normal structures of church to fulfil their ministry without constraints. Within the church, they feel constrained by structures, smallness of vision and limited horizons of many people. They are often right, because their experience of church is within churches led by pastors and teachers rather than apostles and prophets.

And in the West, we are facing a syndrome of many younger people de-churching at a vast rate. Sometimes, the fault may be theirs in not seeing God's vision for his people to be family together, and therefore understanding that they have to accept the limitations of living within a family (there are always blessings and limitations!). But part of the reason could well be that the churches that they have encountered are led by people without apostolic vision, understanding that God has a big vision for his church to train up apostles, send people to nations, penetrate society and influence the destiny of the world!

We need leaders with bigger vision (and vision can be expanded) broader horizons (and horizons can be extended) and magnanimous hearts (and hearts can be enlarged). And prophets and evangelists will flourish when they are set in the context of apostolic leadership, rather than pastoral leadership.

Questions for reflection

1. How can my vision be expanded, to be genuinely apostolic? Are there some specific people I ought to be receiving apostolically?
2. How can the church I lead be filled with faith for a bigger vision? Who ought we be listening to apostolically?
3. How am I helping people build their resilience and be constantly filled with hope?
4. *For group discussion:* In what areas does our team give up too easily? Where do we need more hope?

Pray

Pray for more assurance in the hope we have and for greater resilience in the face of difficulties.

Chapter 9: Apostles and prophets

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.”

(1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

I have talked quite a lot about apostles, apostolic teams, and apostolic vision, character, prayer and perspective. If apostles are “first” in the church, it is because their ministry sets the tone and direction for all the others, and determines the overall focus of the church of Christ. All of the five ministries outlined in Ephesians 4 are part of God’s diverse gifting for equipping his church. We need them ALL! The list in 1 Corinthians 12 is about

different ministry giftings, while the Ephesians 4 list is about equipping ministries. They are slightly different, because there are lots of gifts within the church, but not all of them are equipping ministries. So, Paul is not confused here, he is just talking about different aspects of ministry in the Body of Christ.

The prophetic ministry is a particular manifestation of the life and anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is honoured throughout the Old Testament, while not always being understood by the people of God at large. The prophets are “big players” in the Old Testament, eccentric servants of Yahweh, who keep pointing the way to His people. They are inspirational, unusual, godly, and carry God’s message to his people in the context of the covenant of Yahweh with his people. They are not “lone rangers”, filled with their own revelation and odd ideas; they call God’s people back to the covenant that God has made with his people, of faithfulness, holiness, being prepared to stand out, precisely because they belong to Yahweh. Most of the books of the Old Testament were accepted into the canon of Scripture precisely because they were associated with anointed prophets.

1 Samuel 10 offers us a glimpse into the life of prophets. It tells the story of a band of prophets whom the newly anointed Saul – destined to be king – meets. They are engaging in playing lyres, timbrels, pipes and harps and worshipping Yahweh. The prophet Samuel prophesies to Saul that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul powerfully when he meets them, and that he would receive the same anointing as them, and he would be changed “**into a different person**”. And so it was. Saul was anointed with the same Holy Spirit, and his heart was changed – only it didn’t last! That perhaps warns us of the danger that any anointing might not be as permanent as we would want it to be. Prophetic anointing of the Holy Spirit has the power to change us dynamically, for sure. But we need to stay influenced by that

anointing of the Spirit. In one measure or another, that is our experience as well. If we don't stay in the place of tenderness and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit, we can lose that sense of anointing too!

The importance of prophetic ministry

As we said earlier, prophecy is a mixture of *foretelling* and *forthtelling*. Sometimes it looks forward to things that God is promising he will do, and that gives us a sense of hope and promise for the future, as well as encouragement that God has not forgotten us! Equally, it tells us what we need to be doing **now**, in response to God's love, or warning, or promises.

Amos 3:7 says this to his people:

“Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.”

This encourages us that God wants us to know what his plans are, and so know how we are to respond. Equally, when he has given us prophetic words, we know how to handle life and all that it throws at us:

“Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience.”

(1 Timothy 1:18-19a)

Paul is telling Timothy that if he recalls the prophetic words that have been given to him, he can fight a good fight of faith! Those of us who have received prophetic words at key points in our life can testify that this is the strengthening effect of prophetic

ministry. Prophetic ministry keeps us seeing clearly and fighting energetically.

And whatever negative experiences of prophetic ministry people may have had in the past, the antidote to abuse is always right use, not disuse. The prophetic ministry is too important to the coming of the kingdom in the earth for us to let it fall into disuse!

The promise of prophetic ministry to the church

On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church – the outpouring that Jesus had told his disciples to prepare for and wait for – all of God’s people received the Holy Spirit, began to speak in other tongues and prophesied. When the apostle Peter gets up to explain what is going on to the people assembled, he makes clear that what is happening is a fulfilment of a prophecy of Joel:

“No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Acts 2:16-21)

Clearly Peter is affirming that the events of Pentecost are the fulfilment of this prophecy, and the start of a new age of God's presence through his Holy Spirit. One aspect of this is a fresh outpouring of revelatory experiences for God's people. The story of Jesus in Luke's gospel starts with an outburst of supernatural activity, angelic visitations, prophecies of miraculous pregnancies, prophetic songs, people being struck dumb, and then released to speak in praise of God, the miraculous birth of Jesus, shepherds and wise men being summoned in different ways to recognise the importance of who Jesus was going to be, etc.! The story of the church in Acts of the Apostles starts also with dramatic supernatural activity, the visitation of Pentecost, the healing of the paralysed man at the gate of the temple, incredible answers to prayer, release of people from prison, visions about the mission of the gospel going to Gentiles as well as Jews, etc. A new prophetic outpouring for a new age of church ministry.

The development of the church is founded on prophecies, encounters and revelations. Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, Peter's vision in the house of Cornelius, the ministry of Agabus, Paul and Barnabas being sent out from Antioch on apostolic ministry, the vision of the Macedonian man calling the apostles for help are all important turning-points in the life of the early church. And many leaders and churches today bear witness to foundational prophetic words spoken into their lives, which have determined the course of ministry for individuals and churches. Prophetic ministry is still vital to the life of the church.

In the main passage (1 Corinthians 14) in which there is teaching on prophetic ministry in the life of the church, Paul is at pains to ensure that this is handled properly. He encourages the believers in Corinth to eagerly desire to prophesy (1 Corinthians

14:1, 39), because this is for the strengthening, encouragement and comfort of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:3). He would like everyone to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:5) and indeed, he assumes that all of them can prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:31). These prophecies need to be weighed by other prophets. 1 Corinthians 11:5 implies that women are also praying and prophesying publicly in the assembly⁴. So, Paul assumes that all may prophesy in the church, so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged (1 Corinthians 14:31).

Apostles and prophets in team

As we have already seen, Ephesians 2 indicates that these ministries are foundational in the life of the church. They are different, but complementary.

Apostles are builders, foundation-layers, equippers and facilitators for other ministries. Prophets are seers, address issues of the heart, understand heavenly strategies, and fight alongside apostles. Apostles shape prophets in the sense that they receive the prophetic, and then develop it, apply it and build with it. Prophets shape apostles in the sense that they deliver the word, which helps the apostle see where to go.

When apostles work too much on their own, there is a tendency to things being over-structured, over strategic, and a bit dry. If prophets work too much on their own, there is a tendency to everything being done inspirationally, visions changing every few months, and life being a bit chaotic! The joy and security of

⁴ Paul's later injunction to women to be silent in the assembly seems more likely to refer to a possible problem in Corinth of women noisily asking for explanations about teaching or other things in the context of the church meeting. Paul sees those noisy debates as better suited to the home than the church assembly.

apostolic planning with prophetic inspiration breathing in the life of God is a wonderful combination.

Are we properly releasing prophetic ministry?

I think this is a question that leaders need to keep asking themselves. The direction and life of the church depends on it. Many churches do receive prophetic words within the context of worship and ongoing life of the church, but I think we need to ask some more penetrating and honest questions about how this works. In many charismatic churches, there is a pattern in which meetings start with a time of worship, and then (hopefully) there may be two or three prophetic words brought by members of the congregation to the church. If these words are appropriate for individuals, then, of course, any response will depend on individuals feeling some need for response and taking things further. If the prophetic words are about church life and direction, then response will need to be directed by whoever is leading the meeting, or by a church leader. Often, it seems to me, such words fall to the ground, and are not properly evaluated or responded to.

Moreover, this assumes that we are properly hearing prophetic ministry in the church. In Scripture, I see prophetic revelation being rooted in three sources:

Some prophetic revelation comes directly from God's written word. So, for example, Isaiah assumes that God's word is the basis for prophetic revelation:

“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of

dawn.”
(Isaiah 8:20)⁵

Likewise, Daniel, referring to Jeremiah 25:11, says:

“[...] I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures,
according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah
the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would
last seventy years.”
(Daniel 9:2)

There is prophetic revelation that comes from Scripture which can be different from a teaching revelation. When a prophet preaches from Scripture, there is something different that happens: a teacher explains, feeds, encourages, brings understanding; while a prophet inspires faith, challenge, and encourages response. These are broad generalisations, but nonetheless roughly right! I am suggesting, therefore, that it is not just some inspired devotional thought that needs to be released prophetically, but prophetic preaching needs to be heard in every church. If there are appropriate ministries within the church who can do that, so much the better. But if there aren't, leaders need to ask themselves how such ministry can be invited in.

Some prophetic revelation comes through direct communication with God through his Spirit. See, for example, 1 Samuel 9:27, 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Chronicles 24:20. The prophet receives prophetic revelation directly: it may be about an individual situation, a corporate direction, or a leadership challenge. These things need to be shared in the appropriate forum.

⁵ Wording from NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.
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Equally, there are life experiences that shape the prophet's character and life message (see Hosea, for example). This will be their experience of being called and commissioned to a certain ministry, their personality, character and context, and even rejection and other bitter experiences of life. Prophets often seem to suffer more angst in life than many, and a life message is born in the crucible of suffering and difficulty.

Different types of prophets

We see quite a wide variety of prophetic anointings in the Body of Christ in general. There are word of knowledge or revelatory prophets, which means that the prophetic person receives specific revelation from the Lord about other people or situations. There are "mystical" prophets, that is, those who understand what God is doing in heavenly places, or in national and international situations. There are dreamers and seers: those who receive revelation in dreams and visions about situations and people. There are strategic prophets, those who understand the immediate purposes and strategies of God in current situations. And there are equipping prophets, those who really help others to hear and understand what God is saying.

The training of prophets and aspiring prophets

If we see how important the prophetic ministry is in the church (alongside other ministries), we need to examine as leaders how we are encouraging people to prophesy at a basic level, and how we are seeking to develop mature prophets further after that basic training. Again, it should be clear from Ephesians 4 that God puts prophetic ministry within the church to equip others. But training needs to be done in a planned and intentional way, with practical mentoring. I do not want to go into detail here,

because I have seen different schemes in different places, but suffice it to say that, while some things can be caught or transmitted by osmosis, most training and impartation is done by a deliberate process of training and discipleship. Without a clear plan, most of what we hope will happen remains simply that: hope unrealised!

Perhaps I can conclude this chapter by offering some testimonies of partnership between apostles and prophets. There are many more!

I am an apostolic leader. For many years in Oxfordshire Community Churches, I worked closely with a prophet well known in the Salt & Light family (we are still good friends!). He was very helpful in prophesying into pastoral situations and church situations. A classic many of us still remember occurred in 1981, when, in a joint meeting of churches from Cote, Kidlington and Witney, he prophesied that we were like a rice pudding⁶, and God wanted to take his ladle, and “dollop us out⁷ around the county”. Not many people at the time were talking about church planting, but this prophecy started us on that journey, which over the years became very fruitful within the county and in other nations.

A couple of years ago, at a camp for our French-speaking churches (called the Destinée family) in Europe, we invited an American prophet to be the main speaker. We felt that we were starting a new phase, with transitions in our leadership team in Destinée. He came in very gently, won people’s confidence, and then, half-way through the week, started to prophesy with such faith and clarity what God wanted to do in the countries

⁶ A British pudding made of creamy soft rice and milk

⁷ “Dollop” is British English slang for roughly serving a large, shapeless mass of something, especially soft food

represented (and indeed, in French-speaking countries of Africa). There was such clarity and faith generated by this proclamation and declaration of God's will and purpose, that later that day we had the most powerful and moving time of prayer and focus on these nations, and people left the camp totally rejuvenated in their faith and enthusiasm for what God was promising to do.

More recently, I went to a country which I will not name, because it could compromise our friends there, who are facing great hardship. I travelled with Dave, a prophet from Basingstoke who works with our UK team, and a younger leader, Mark, from Oxfordshire, who also has a prophetic edge. We were working with a whole group of leaders and churches which have been planted in the last ten years or so. I felt I had heard some things from God that I needed to share to help them move forward. When my friend Dave arrived, he felt God had showed him complementary things, and likewise Mark was stirred with some of the same things. We had one of the most powerful times of breakthrough that I think I have ministered into for some time, and our friends felt encouraged, strengthened in their faith, and released with fresh energy into their future in God. I can't give more details because of the sensitive nature of the situation, but it was profound, exciting, faith-building and powerful. I came home more determined than ever to work in partnership with other ministries. The synergy and complementarity this brings is powerful in the service of God's kingdom.

Questions for reflection

1. Can I identify any prophets in my church? Do I see anyone with signs of the gifting who needs equipping and supporting to develop that gift?
2. What resources do we currently have in place to develop prophetic ministry? Do we need any external help to improve these?
3. What E4 prophets do I and my church receive? How can they help our local prophets grow in their gifting?
4. *For group discussion:* What prophetic direction has our team received over the last five years? How have we responded to these words? Are there any we need to take more seriously than we have done?

Pray

Pray for a soft heart to respond to what God is saying prophetically.

Chapter 10: Apostles and evangelists

I remember an evangelist coming to the church in Liverpool where I grew up. I was only eight years old at the time, but even then I quickly became aware that there was something special about the meetings and the ministry that was going on. Our pastor was a very humble man, and always made space for other ministries to impact us in our church. Night after night, we saw people become Christians, get healed from blindness, deafness and paralysis of various sorts, and delivered from all sorts of bondages. I think perhaps this was my first encounter with a genuine evangelist, and I was impressed. The meetings grew and grew. What was planned for a week expanded to three weeks, and, night after night, people kept coming until, on the last few nights, the doors of the church had to be locked half an hour before the meetings, because the church building, which could seat about 1200 people, was packed to the limits, and things were becoming dangerous!

As a teenager, I spent lots of time with our youth group going out on the streets of Liverpool doing open air evangelism. One of my regular summer activities was doing beach evangelism on various beaches around UK. There is nothing that matches the excitement of talking to people about Jesus. The great thing about beach evangelism is that people have time on their holidays to think about life and its meaning. In the last thirty years or so, Alpha has been a great tool for local churches in introducing people to the Christian faith; just recently all the material and resources have been updated in an excellent video format and the course is gathering fresh momentum. In the last couple of years, there has been a new explosion of street evangelism through The Turning, which developed spontaneously from a local church in Reading, UK. It has become clear that, far from people in today's secular society being resistant to the Christian faith, many are only too willing to talk about the purpose and meaning of life, and many are ready to take steps to try to find God.

Seeing people come to Christ is one of the greatest excitements of our lives. One reason why I love catching up with my good friend Rich Colbrook, who leads Community Church Leeds, is because he always has fresh stories of people who are coming to Christ, or seeing dramatic answers to prayer, and in whose lives God is obviously doing amazing things.

Evangelists know that people will come to Christ. The rest of us hope they will. Evangelists know that there is only one thing worth investing in, and that is seeing people come to Jesus. Others go on mission out of a sense of duty: we know we have to share the gospel and run our Alpha Courses, or evangelise through sport or other activities; but evangelists do it naturally, daily, excitedly and in a driven way!

Evangelists and the church

It's not easy for evangelists to live in the church. Quite a lot of evangelistic people I know, even within our own family of Salt & Light churches, have not really felt highly valued in their churches, nor found another place of value. Equally, there are a lot of meetings that don't seem to have much point to evangelists. There's not enough action, and not enough non-Christians there. Evangelists think outside the box, and entrepreneurially. They are creative, faith-filled and fun, constantly on the move. They are a gift from the Risen Christ to his church, if only the church knew how to receive them and work in partnership with them. They themselves are also independent, and don't want the freedom of what they are doing taken over by "systems" people. The problem is twofold: firstly, many "systems" leaders don't properly know how to embrace the evangelistic ministry in their churches; and secondly, evangelists can be awkward about fitting into our churches.

However, I want to suggest that evangelists operating on their own is one of the worst things that can happen. First, they themselves cannot keep pioneering new things and maintaining all those that they are bringing to Christ. They need teams for that, and they are not necessarily the best team-builders, organisers or administrators. Second, their effectiveness will be limited by their own capacity, which, despite their optimism, will have its limits. And third, others in the Body of Christ who have embryonic evangelistic gifting will not be released and equipped into the full measure of their faith and potential fruitfulness.

This is why evangelists need to work with others, and in particular alongside apostles. Evangelists will not automatically

be accepted by lots of faithful church members because they are not “safe”. Apostles can open doors for evangelists, and encourage faithful people to accept them, listen to them, and ultimately to be fired up and equipped by them. Pastors and teachers cannot inspire people like evangelists can. They can try! But it doesn’t work. Pastors and teachers know we should be witnesses, love the lost and lead them to Jesus, but for them it is hard work and obligation. For evangelists, it is fun, exciting, inspiring and catching, in fact, probably the only things worth doing!

Evangelists are not necessarily the best team players. They like a team around them, but only if it is advancing their goals and passions. Perhaps surprisingly, since they are positive, salesman-type people, they need quite a lot of encouragement, and want to know that they are included and that their perspectives are valued. This takes skill from the team leader. By and large, for example, teachers do not need lots of encouragement, because they are word-driven, and move at a steady place, and they can often think everyone should be like that! However, evangelists seem to be more emotional, more up and down, and don’t like feeling hemmed in. They need to be given quite a lot of scope, but strongly encouraged to work in team and not “opt out”.

Evangelists equipping others

It is important to say that there is a significant difference between those who are naturally gifted as evangelists, and those who have an equipping ministry in the church as evangelists. Both are good in their own right, but not the same. The first naturally gets on with the job, spends time with non-Christians, and leads them to Jesus. The second wants to see other Christians enjoy being evangelistic and become good at it, and

so wants to encourage, inspire and equip others. When I am talking about the evangelist working in the apostolic team (as Ephesians 4 does), I am talking about this equipping gift. There is nothing wrong with the individual person being evangelistically motivated and getting on with it if that is God's call on their life, but we need equipping evangelists in the church to help many more be motivated and equipped for the same ministry. We need lots and lots of evangelists in the church!

Some of my evangelist friends

I have had the privilege of working with a number of evangelistically motivated people, and conclude this chapter with one or two testimonies about partnership with them:

Roger is a fascinating mixture of pastor and evangelist. He loves people whether they are Christians or non-Christians. He was a young married man and a pig-farmer when he first joined the church I was leading. His energy was not always appreciated by the more traditional members of our church, as he played the flute, danced, and sometimes led the kids in exuberant praise. But he also always wanted to see people healed, and applied himself to be trained in that area of ministry, and in moving in the word of knowledge. He and I have travelled in and out of different churches and nations together. Wherever he has the door opened to him, he inspires faith, sees people come to Jesus, ministers healing, and inspires others to move in the same way.

My wife, Lorraine, and I have had the privilege of working in French-speaking countries for many years. God has used us to pastor and train leaders, and build them together relationally within the Body of Christ. Cedric and Audrey, both of whom have evangelistic hearts and gifts, have worked alongside us

into a variety of situations. They have spent a couple of years living in France in a church who were relating to us. The goal was quite simply to sow an evangelistic heart and perspective into a church which had none of that. This was a quite prophetic church, but it was not seeing anyone come to Christ. Cedric and Audrey were able to sow in a different missional heart, which bore fruit in the long term. After this adventure of moving to France to help a church in its evangelistic ministry, they moved to East Berlin, and pioneered and planted a church there, using Alpha as the regular tool for reaching out to others.

I have enjoyed working with Rich and Kate into a variety of churches and situations in the UK, France, Canada and other countries. Rich and Kate are a dynamic evangelistic couple, who are not only extremely effective in leading people to Jesus themselves, but think non-stop about how to be more fruitful, more effective and more strategic, and how to help others be and do the same. Their faith is contagious, their enthusiasm unquenchable, and their energy without bounds. Some of these doors would not have opened to them if we had not opened them; equally, when we work together in and out of situations there is a complementarity of gifting which is extremely fruitful.

Questions for reflection

1. With which other (external) ministries am I working in effective partnerships in the church? Do I need to develop greater strategic vision for these ministry partnerships?
2. What evangelists can I identify in my church? How can I make sure they feel heard, included in church life and supported in living out their calling?
3. Is there an E4 evangelist in my church? If so, how can I give them space to enthuse and equip other members of the church? If not, who could we partner with to receive that equipping?
4. *For group discussion:* If our team includes an evangelist, what space are we giving them to inspire us? If it doesn't, who is helping us (or could help us) be effective in reaching out to the lost?

Pray

Pray for a longing to see people come to know Christ.

Chapter 11:

Apostles and pastors

Pastors and teachers (see next chapter) are fundamental ministries in the Body of Christ. My experience over forty years of ministry is that the great majority of local elders will major in one or other of these gifts. There is significant confusion in a large part of the church in today's world, in that, for many churches, the senior leader in the local church is called a pastor. He may or may not be pastorally gifted, and may or may not see his main role as a shepherd, which is the most commonly used word in both Hebrew and Greek to describe leaders amongst God's people.

When Paul talks about the fivefold ministries that the Risen Christ gives as gifts to the church, he talks about apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. The word *pastor* is the Latin word for *shepherd*, and has often been adopted as a title for the senior leader of a church, whatever gifting he may have. But the ministry of a *shepherd* in the Body of Christ is a significant and specific ministry of care for God's people,

helping them to grow, flourish and abound in their relationship with Christ. It is very much centred upon the people, where they are, the circumstances they are facing, the events of their lives, and the personal challenges they face and blessings they enjoy.

Pastors are people-focused

All leadership must be people-focused, but the shepherding or pastoral gift is focused on people par excellence. Shepherds understand people intuitively and instinctively, recognise how best to motivate them, and want to encourage them to be all that God wants them to be. This may be done through one-to-one relationships, small group discipleship or pastoral training courses of one sort or another. This is different from pastoral equipping ministries, who equip others to care for God's people. Equipping pastors will train others to care, help them understand the deep waters that people may end up walking through, and teach others how to care, counsel and pray for God's people in order that they become victors in the Christian life. Equipping pastors/shepherds reproduce pastors/shepherds, or people with a shepherding heart.

Pastors in team

The true pastor wants everyone to flourish, and wants people to feel good! Sometimes this means that they don't like confrontation, even the necessary confrontation with people which will change them. They are often encouragers rather than confronters. They don't always challenge, and can sometimes hide what they really feel in the context of team discussions. There is a difference between pastoral care and discipleship. Pastoral/shepherding care simply looks after people where they

are, understands the situations people are walking through, and helps people overcome the challenges and difficulties of life. Discipleship confronts people with the reality of their own character weaknesses and seeks to train them to live better, more upright, honest and loving lives for Jesus Christ.

Because the pastoral ministry is less contentious, and more easily understood, I don't need to spend as much time on it. However, it is worth illustrating how this fivefold ministry can be used for the benefit of the Body of Christ, and the equipping of local church members.

Some of my pastor friends

For many years, Geoff and Mary were part of our apostolic team in Oxfordshire Community Churches. For very many of those years, they ran a pastoral training course which served not only our own churches in Oxfordshire, but a much wider grouping of churches in Salt & Light UK. Over the years, the fruit of these pastoral training courses (each of them a year long's training with one day a month teaching, and then reading and mentoring in between the sessions) has been immense, and many people have been equipped to care for others in the Body of Christ. They have reproduced themselves in many other people, who now know how to care for God's people in lots of different situations.

Now that the Salt & Light UK team has devolved into different apostolic spheres, many of them are looking at how they can develop similar pastoral training courses or programmes for the current needs and situations that people face. It doesn't get easier. The diversity of our society, and the current inclusiveness with which people think quite naturally, mean that we have to improve our game, when it comes to pastoral training and

equipping. We need to be clear about what the Bible teaches, and much more adept in caring for people who have grown up in a very confused world. This is a vital gift in the Body of Christ, and we need to see it released more and more.

Questions for reflection

1. Who can I identify as a shepherding pastor in my church? How can I help them challenge and disciple effectively?
2. Is the local church of which I am part seeing new leaders raised up in shepherding ministries? How can we advance and improve this process?
3. How is care expressed in my church and by whom? Do we need to ask an E4 pastor to help us grow and become more effective in this area? Who do we connect with who could help?
4. *For group discussion:* Are the members of our team effectively discipling those we pastor? What changes do we need to make to ensure we are?

Pray

Pray for a greater desire to see God's people cared for and able to grow with healthy support.

Chapter 12: Apostles and teachers

Many churches in many places excel in the teaching gift. This is often focused around a particular person with a strong teaching and preaching gift. In the past, names like Charles Spurgeon or Martin Lloyd-Jones spring to mind. In recent history, teachers like David Pawson, John Piper, Tim Keller, Tom Wright, Chris Wright and others, too many to name, will be familiar to many. Within our own network of churches there are some fine Bible teachers.

We need the teaching gift. It puts firm foundations into any local church, and prevents us from being “blown here and there by every wind of teaching” (Ephesians 4:14). This is as much a danger currently as it ever was. The superabundance of materials now available on the internet, for example, much of which has its own bias, needs testing against the teaching of scripture.

We need those who have been trained theologically to help us in this. While it is clear that many theologians have their own bias

and may not be wholly reliable, it is also true that those who have theological training and foundations can help us from going off the rails theologically, and being naïve or simplistic.

The founding father of our Salt & Light family, Barney Coombs, was clear in his desire that our family of churches should be well trained and established in the word of God. That is why we began the King's Bible College, first in Vancouver, and then in the UK. This developed into Kings Online, and the King's Bible College and Training Centre, and then the King's School of Theology. Now we have multiplied courses in UK, North America, India and many African nations.

Teachers in team

Within an apostolic team, the teaching gift has an important place. It helps to keep all of our ministries on track, by drawing us back to the scriptures, and demanding that we remain true to them. It resists an overly pragmatic approach to God's work and new initiatives. It equips God's people to understand the life that they live as they walk with Christ, and consistently encourages us to root everything in scripture.

Occasionally, the teacher can be unnecessarily pedantic, and frankly rather dull and boring. The insistence on line upon line, and precept upon precept can be a challenge to us all. The teacher is fascinated by detail that many of us often find slightly tedious. The teaching in our churches needs to be a mix of teaching, preaching, sharing of experience, encouragement, envisioning and exhortation. Too much of any one of these can be repetitive and monotonous. Too much exhortation is especially wearying, because it makes us feel we are never doing enough.

In previous years, people welcomed a significant “download” of biblical material and exposition of the Biblical text. We still need exposition of the text, but today’s world demands that we do it in shorter bursts, with much more sympathy for a generation that works with a shorter time span of concentration than previous generations. Equally, teaching that is accompanied by mentoring relationships is hugely important today, and any teaching ministry in the church needs to be asking what the best means of exercising the teaching gift is. The world of education can teach the church a great deal about the manner in which we teach today.

Some of my teaching friends

The fivefold teaching gift is a major blessing within the life of any church, because it develops many teaching, preaching and communication gifts within the church. Mike Beaumont was part of our Oxfordshire apostolic team for many years, and trained up several generations of teachers and preachers in our churches, and is now doing the same in the north-east of England.

Steve Jones, who leads the Oxford Community Church, is one of our gifted teachers in the Salt & Light family, and is developing many teaching and equipping materials for a new generation of leaders, including teachers and preachers. This is a huge blessing in the Body of Christ.

Questions for reflection

1. What different methods of teaching does my church have in place? How do we ensure these are meeting the needs of the congregation?
2. What support and development does my church have in place for emerging teachers? How do we ensure they receive enough opportunity to practise and feedback to improve?
3. Do I see the church grow in response to the teaching it receives? What E4 teacher could help our teachers become more effective?
4. *For group discussion:* How does our team plan teaching with a view to discipling our church? How do we set our expectations and evaluate the impact of our teaching?

Pray

Pray for teaching to encourage people to dig into God's Word for themselves.

Chapter 13: Cross-cultural Ephesians 4 ministry

There is no doubt that Acts 15 records for us one of the most important cross-cultural encounters for the early church development. In the early church, this was to do with the interaction of Jews and non-Jews. This was a massive cultural barrier. The gospel was for all people of any ethnic background, but it took dramatic intervention of God through dreams and visions for the apostle Peter to recognise, while staying in the house of Cornelius, that he needed to change his own position on this matter.

I am grateful to my friend Dave Richards, who travels widely across many continents in the Body of Christ, for his comments on this subject. It is clear that, when we work cross-culturally, there are many possible impediments to this equipping work taking place effectively.

France

A large portion of my time is spent working in France and other French-speaking countries. British and French people have had a love-hate relationship for years. Neither of us has ever been really willing to receive from the other. The French nation is much more prophetic than British people. My wife, Lorraine, and I often appreciate French worship more than our worship back home. It tends to take off faster, and be much livelier than worship in British settings. We love that! The history of the French church, however, is one of division. Churches can start, grow to about 25, have a massive row, and then split into two non-viable units! The main thing that we have worked on as we have laid foundations in French-speaking churches is the importance of relationship in the Body of Christ, how to appreciate the gifts in one another, and how to welcome those gifts when they are different from our own. We have taught for years how to be gracious with one another, and how to resolve conflicts and still work and walk together.

Africa

One of the challenges in Africa is the love of titles and position in ministry in the church. Many leaders in the church in Africa expect to be the “chief”. They expect to be honoured. Desiring ministry is often about wanting respect from others. This is totally in contradiction of the teaching of Jesus who taught about servant leadership. Much of our input in leadership training in Africa, is to teach about servant leadership, working in teams, receiving the giftings of other leaders, and not having to be served, but to serve. Instinctively, church leaders recognise this as the teaching of Jesus, but there is a huge cultural barrier to overcome here. Most African leaders like the idea of team

ministry, so long as they are leading the team. Serving others with our gifts is a huge step change!

UK

In the UK, we have many blind spots in our own understanding of leadership. Travelling outside of our own country, and listening to the views of other nations, often highlights these blind spots, which we need to understand and change. By and large, our colonial history has made us very arrogant. We think of ourselves as inherently better than others, and therefore we tend to be paternalistic in our approach to other nations. This is not godly, and we need to change. When we go abroad and serve others, we need to be humble, offering insights as an act of service. British people are often very good teachers, which is a blessing to the wider Body of Christ, although we have to understand that other nations often appreciate shorter, humbler and less involved teaching, rather than long, complicated and detailed teaching. British people need to learn how to receive insights from other nations, which is counter-cultural for us.

USA

The US has a history of independence and entrepreneurial, pioneering activity. This is good and bad at the same time! Americans are very relational so long as it works for them; but have no problem in moving out of relationship if it is deemed not to be working for them. This independence can make them resistant to discipleship and working in teams in the long-term. The individual's opinion is often higher in value than the opinion of team. This can mean that fivefold ministry teams are a challenge to work in, and definitely not a natural setting for them. Apostolic input will constantly be challenging this!

Scandinavia

One of Scandinavia's cultural norms is the "Spirit of Jantelagen". This is all about everyone being equal. In status and value, this is obviously true. At the same time, when that becomes a reason for not receiving spiritual authority, or fivefold ministry, and even recognising elders as having a leadership gift in the Body of Christ, then we have a problem. All such things hinder the correct working of fivefold ministries in the church, and will stop churches developing adequate fivefold ministry, whose equipping and authority is recognised by the whole church.

These are just some examples of the challenges we face when we are trying to work with fivefold ministries in different settings. It is often history that will stop us receiving from others, just as it was with Jews and Samaritans, just as it may be with the British and French. This will take humble leadership from those who are seeking to input into such situations, and humble acceptance from those of us who recognise we need to receive ministries from other nations in order to equip us for our work of ministry.

Which leads us to another point. Without doubt, God puts weaknesses in one part of his family, in order to ensure that we receive from another part of his body. Equally, he puts strengths in other parts, in order to allow us to be a blessing to other parts of his family. Perhaps, however, we need to examine much more carefully whether we need to establish multi-cultural as well as fivefold ministry teams, so that we can really receive from all the richness that there is in the Body of Christ. This is a great blessing, and a great challenge too!

Questions for reflection

1. How do I look to learn from other cultures? What riches can I see in them that would bless my church?
2. How do I welcome people from different backgrounds? How can I deepen that relationship?
3. What national and cultural weaknesses have I adopted? Who could challenge me on these?
4. *For group discussion:* Does our team reflect the ethnic and cultural make-up of our church? How can we develop leaders from ethnic and cultural minorities?

Pray

Pray for the church to celebrate the diversity God has placed within it.

Chapter 14: Training others for fivefold ministry

One of the features of fivefold ministry is how we train up others on the job, because we are always thinking of the future and not just the present. We are always looking to develop potential. And fivefold ministry is equipping others for their work of ministry. Success means having successors, and so this is a great area of reflection for us all.

If we read the story of Paul's relationship with Timothy in Acts of the Apostles, this is what we see. Paul first spots Timothy in Lystra – and the churches in Lystra and Iconium obviously saw a future for him – and takes him with him to encourage the churches (Acts 16:1-2). Paul, Silas and Timothy travel together in Asia Minor, eventually ending up in Troas (Acts 16:11). Paul leaves Silas and Timothy in Berea while he goes on to Athens. In other words, Timothy is given responsibility, along with Silas, in his own right (Acts 17:14-15).

Later on, Paul sends two “helpers”, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia while he stays in Asia. Paul’s goal is to multiply teams, fruitfulness and effectiveness. Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece with Sopater (originally from Berea) Aristarchus and Secundus (from Thessalonica), Gaius from Derbe, Timothy (from Lystra), and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. Luke is also travelling with them. A team of at least nine at that point!

This was more than a strategy, or tactics for ministry: for Paul the apostle, this was all about relationship, and how that works.

Paul has a special place in his heart for Timothy. Not only does he see his potential, he hears good reports of him, and takes him with him. Eventually, he sends him as a delegate to Macedonia, hopes also to send him to Philippi, and finally entrusts to his care the outstanding church in Ephesus. There are good reasons why Paul feels the way he does about Timothy, as seen in Philippians 2:19-23:

“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him [of such a kindred spirit], who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.”

As far as Paul is concerned, Timothy has the same values as Paul, is absorbed with Christ and his Kingdom, is totally unself-seeking, wants to be a son, and serves unstintingly.

These are the qualities that allow people to be trained and released into ministry. It is because of all this that Paul is prepared to send Timothy to lead the significant church in Ephesus on his behalf. But now it is even more important that Paul gives Timothy the right input. When we are carrying significant responsibilities, the input, advice and accountability that we receive needs to be even clearer than it is in a period of training! We need to resist the joint temptations of pride, self-sufficiency and independence, and acknowledge our need of gifted people around us to equip us.

Training for ministry – and ongoing oversight

What is clear from Paul's ministry is that, having planted churches, he feels a sense of responsibility for them. Hence the New Testament letters to many of them! Likewise, having trained leaders, such as Timothy, Titus and others, he feels a sense of ongoing care for them. This is not control or interference, it is simply that those who have fathered others have a great sense of concern for them.

The following themes come through the letters of Paul to Timothy: the importance of avoiding distractions, the importance of staying Christ-centred, the importance of fighting the fight of faith, and the importance of keeping a spiritual perspective and staying in training spiritually speaking!

Paul is concerned for Timothy's character as a leader (character is always the major qualification for ministry). He does not want him to be argumentative, conceited, timid, or compromised by money.

Equally, Paul shares with Timothy his apostolic concerns for the church in Ephesus, for prayer to be central, for worship to be orderly, for leaders to have good character, for doctrine to be

biblical, and for family relationships within the church to be of the highest order.

Paul's development of Timothy underlines that apostolic ministry has a sense of responsibility for churches they have planted, and for leaders that they have put in place. Paul wants to train people properly if they are part of his team, and he sees the need to continue to input to those he has trained if they are caring for churches that he has been responsible for planting. Sometimes we are tempted to think that all we need to do is train and release leaders and future leaders, but the apostle Paul obviously feels ongoing responsibility for leaders he has trained. This is not control, but care for those he has fathered.

But equally, other ministries need to be trained and developed. And every fivefold ministry reproduces after its own kind. Equipping prophets need to train those with prophetic gifts and tendencies in how to hear God better, and how to prophesy with clarity and effectiveness. Prophets need training in the tone, content and biblical basis for their prophecies, and to understand the power of their gift in bringing encouragement to individuals and direction to the church as a whole. This is something that has been practised within our Salt & Light family by prophetic people such as Bryn Franklin, Dave Richards, and Dave Oliver, Neville Wright and others. It needs to be continued across our churches, if we are to see prophetic ministry flourish and be sharp.

Equipping evangelists need to gather around them groups of evangelistically motivated people in order to inspire vision and confidence that their gifts are valued, need extending and must function for the good of the whole in the body of Christ. Their conversation will be how to encourage people in churches to make friends with non-Christians, to think of the processes that help people go on a spiritual journey towards an encounter with

Christ, and how to help people make a decision to follow Jesus and get involved in a process of discipleship. I have watched Rich Colbrook do this to great effect over the last few years. This has helped those with an evangelistic motivation feel valued, encouraged, given confidence and strategies!

Equipping pastors are not only thinking about how they can care for people, but how they can encourage many of God's people to care for others in their local churches. Many of God's people are natural carers anyway; they love God, and they love people. But many others feel that they do not have the knowledge or the ability to care for others. Often caring for others is an issue of sanctified common sense, sharing with people our own experience of walking with God, and encouraging them in fairly obvious ways. And if people get stuck, they can always shout for help! Just recently in the Salt & Light Advance sphere of churches (UK), the sphere team have encouraged 2-3 people with a pastoral gift to do some thinking about how people can be equipped to care pastorally for others, and have produced some video material and other resources to develop this whole aspect of pastoral training in their group of churches. This is already resulting in people feeling more confident to engage in training others one-to-one, which is a huge blessing to the Body of Christ.

Teachers with an equipping gift will also reproduce after their own kind, and with good programmes and attention to detail. No-one produces training material as well as teachers! The Body of Christ needs this sort of training. Many churches do not have adequate Bible teachers and preachers, so developing these giftings across groups of churches is greatly needed. It seems to me that this is the great blessing of having a number of different apostolic spheres. Across each of these we can help one another develop the sort of ministries we lack. We can train people

theologically, in communication skills, and Biblical exposition. All of this must, of course, be planned. Developing the different giftings does not all have to happen at once, or local churches and their people become overloaded with training courses. Timing and intensity of training is a matter of overall leadership strategy, and each fivefold team needs to understand that and plan accordingly.

Questions for reflection

1. For older leaders: Do I have an ongoing concern for those we have trained for ministry? How do I still connect with them and support them?
2. For newer leaders: Am I still welcoming input and shaping from other leaders? In what areas am I more reluctant to accept challenge? Why?
3. How can my church work with others to ensure that we equip all our people for their calling and gifting?
4. *For group discussion:* How much does our team feel that our church needs ongoing input from apostolic figures? Are we expectant that apostolic ministry can help radically transform our church? How can we posture ourselves to receive apostolic input more effectively?

Pray

Pray for those you have trained up or are currently training. Thank God for those who have invested in you.

Chapter 15:

Conclusion

I believe that many churches are not experiencing the richness of the ministries that the ascended Jesus wants to pour out as gifts on his church. The reason for this could be an inadequate understanding of what these gifts look like within the life of a local church or groups of churches. Equally, it may just be a case of local churches not knowing how to access such gifts. I want to suggest that leadership teams and churches need to work hard in a number of areas to rectify this, release lots of differently gifted people into their full stature of service of Christ, and enrich the life of the church in having many different ministries functioning in church life. We need to keep working on the following areas, as we examine ourselves, our leadership and our church life.

Dealing with ‘Senior Pastor syndrome’

I don’t even know properly how to express this. Many churches, especially charismatic churches, believe in their hearts in the

Biblical revelation of fivefold ministry, and the importance of every-member ministry in the Body of Christ, but there is still a blockage around the “main leader”, “the lead elder”, “the senior pastor”. I acknowledge that every team needs to have a team leader, otherwise we have chaos and confusion. But the team leader needs to see this as all about setting an example of faith, zeal for God’s kingdom and enabling others to function in their ministry, and not as a position of authority in which most things are centred around “the main guy”.

The change that needs to take place here is first in the heart of the team leader, who now wants to give space to others, encourage others to serve and minister in the life of the church, and draw all of God’s people into the value of service to Jesus. The “team leader” needs to reflect on this critically himself or herself, and invite the perspectives of the team he or she leads. Often the team leader has a blind spot about their own leadership, believing they are doing one thing, but actually practising another.

Equipping people with all of the fivefold ministries

If the “main leader” is a teacher, how are prophets going to get equipped within the local church? If the “main leader” is prophetic, how are evangelists going to be equipped for their ministry? And so on.

My experience suggests that most local churches do not have more than one or two gifted ministry-equippers within the local church, and therefore they are going to have to reach out to other gifted ministries to come into the local church to help with this equipping. This is the value of being part of a wider of family or network of churches. This gives us access to people we trust who we can invite to help us in this equipping role. We

definitely don't want to invite in some self-appointed and unconnected ministry to come in and help us! Equally, grouping churches together into some sort of "resource base" or "apostolic centre" allows us to share these ministries through an apostolic team working across the churches. This can be a real gift to us all, and will lead to greater co-ordination of the gifts for the benefit of all of us.

Giving people hope that their gifting will be recognised and released

There is often frustration in our churches, in some cases definitely warranted, that the gifting of individuals is not being recognised, trained up and released. Jesus definitely does not want cruise ships or liners where everyone is somehow enjoying the pleasure of being on board and entertained (like a lot of our consumerist Christianity today), but something more like battleships where everyone is part of the crew taking the Kingdom of God into this world. The engagement of all of God's people in the task of the Kingdom through being recognised and equipped for ministry is one of our main challenges. This requires inspirational envisioning and practical and strategic equipping.

I am praying that somehow this little book will spur on the goal of developing the Body of Christ in his world, where everyone understands the gift that God has put in them, feels their own value as a son or daughter of their heavenly Father, and is being released and equipped for that ministry that the heavenly Father has designated and gifted them for. I pray that leaders will keep thinking much more strategically and consistently about how to equip and involve God's people in the mission of their church,

so that the lament that we hear often that “20% of the people do 80% of the work in the church” is positively changed, so that all God’s people are thoroughly passionate about the life of God’s kingdom, understand that it is the one thing that lasts for eternity, and gladly give themselves to being trained and released for it!

Appendix:

Are fivefold ministries open to both men and women?

I have deliberately tried to avoid this question up to this point. Over the last few years, this has been a divisive issue in the Body of Christ at large, and definitely within our Salt & Light family. But in terms of most of these ministries, this is not the big question. For me, the big question is: how do we release as many of God's people into the ministries that God has for them?

First, I want to say that I feel biblically that both Jesus and the apostle Paul opened the door wide to women's participation in ministry, and so must we. There were women prophets in the New Testament, women praying and prophesying in the life of the church, women such as Priscilla engaged in teaching others, women highly valued "amongst the apostles" (although the meaning of that is not straightforward to evaluate), and women in leadership positions as deacons within local churches.

I find myself working very easily in different settings with people of varied opinions about this, as there is so much else that unites us. In the end, all I can express is my opinion, and how I read scripture. Some people will agree with me wholeheartedly, others will think I am a bit “soft” and others will think that I am far from radical enough.

The issue revolves to a large part around how we read the scriptures that talk about leadership in the church, and how we use words like “egalitarian” and “complementarian”, terms that have become associated with the debate about women’s roles in leadership.

How do we understand the Bible?

The first question about how we read scriptures about leadership is, slightly simplistically:

“Is what we read in scripture a plumb-line for the church today, or does it simply describe a starting-point from which we need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us as culture changes and develops?” This question is an important one theologically. It is about our general view of scripture, and affects how we think about God, salvation, mission and what we think the Kingdom of God looks like as the gospel permeates all sorts of different cultures. In the case of leadership, our view of leadership will determine how God’s family is built in the life of the church. Specifically, we can see a number of instances in which the early apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to change previous understandings, for example, the inclusion of Gentiles in mission and what the basics of the gospel were. Jesus himself both included women in his company, and valued them highly, while ensuring that the founding apostles of the church were men. The appointment of elders in the New Testament church

recalls the Old Testament elders of the community of God's people, who were fathers of families within the community. In the church, men are appointed elders, taking responsibility for the faith community, while women are given important roles of leadership in the early church as well, taking a leading part in the life of the church. (c.f. Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis, all worthy of mention in Romans 16. c.f. also Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4.2)

Egalitarians are eager to emphasise that men and women are equal and identical in all the possible working out of leadership and ministry within the church. Clearly Jesus and Paul both included women in their teams, and elevated them highly compared with the world around them. Given that our thinking has now evolved concerning the release of women to every possible function within society, should we not also be prepared to do this within the church?

Complementarians want to affirm the equality of access to relationship with God and Jesus that both men and women enjoy, and the absolute equality of status as sons and daughters in the family of God, and, at the same time, want to affirm different roles and gifts for men and women in the Body of Christ.

So how do we resolve this difference of perspective?

My own position

I am aware that my own resolution of the matter will not satisfy everyone, but I feel it is important to describe and explain it, such as it is: I believe that, for years, the church handled the issue of leadership and gender divisions wrongly. This is not difficult to acknowledge, because there are lots of things that have been handled wrongly in the life of the church at various

times, for example, church discipline, the life of the Holy Spirit, law and grace, etc. As a younger leader, I was probably overzealous about certain things which I have now hopefully learned to moderate. There may yet be greater revelation to come my way. I have come to see over the years that God's creation mandate is definitely for men and women to work together (I know that this is blatantly obvious in the word of God, but still!). The creation story is **very clear** that God created us male and female "in his own image". Just as, in the Trinity, there is a co-operation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and a complementarity between them, so that they work together in mutual submission and affection, so God sets men and women in his creation to work together, to be fruitful and multiply, and to fill and subdue the earth, in mutual submission and affection. So, if we believe this, and if we are genuine complementarians, we must insist that men and women work together in leadership in the church. We need one another, we are made to work together, and we really do have different gifts which are both needed. From the very many books that I have read on this issue, it seems that egalitarians understand this differently, as they believe that we are equal and identical in the gifts that we carry, and therefore that men or women can fulfil the same role. Personally, I don't see this, whether in the pragmatics of real life, or in the scripture.

I believe that, in order to build family, fathers and mothers are needed to do this together. Now I know that there is great grace, given by God himself, for single-parent families. Indeed, I spent two years on my own as a father to three children, after my first wife died, and can bear testimony to the grace that abounds to single-parent families. At the same time, fathers and mothers complement one another in the care of their families. Fathers bring strength, protection and direction to their families, while mothers bring care, sensitivity and understanding. My older

children were very grateful when I married Lorraine; and my younger children definitely valued having someone more sensitive than I as a parent. They also valued me as someone less emotional! While sometimes fathers have to exercise maternal care, and mothers have to exercise fatherly direction, especially if the father is not there, when both are functioning side by side, what peace and blessing flow into the family!

I also believe that this is what headship is about. Ephesians 5 is very clear that, in the church, Jesus exercises headship: he is head of his Body, of which he is the Saviour. Paul sees that this is how men should love their wives, as Christ loves the church, exercising headship, and taking responsibility for their wives and family, caring for them properly, and releasing them from pressure, stress and emotional weight. That is what men are made to take responsibility for! It doesn't stop men submitting to their wives, listening to them, accepting when their perspectives are right, and being guided by them. But equally, a danger for men is to abdicate responsibility, and load things on to their wives. That's why men need to 'lift holy hands in prayer' (1 Timothy 2:8), because they are taking spiritual responsibility for their homes, their families and the church.

I believe that women may and should prophesy in church, and therefore that they can be prophetesses in the church. This is clear from 1 Corinthians 11:5, and Acts 21:9. Actually, my experience is that women are often much more spiritually sensitive and open to the Holy Spirit, and therefore will often hear more clearly than men what he is saying. I am equally convinced that they can be evangelistic, pastoral and good at teaching the word. I do not consider 1 Timothy 2:11ff to be a ban on women teaching, but on women "teaching and usurping authority" over men. In other words, women are called to be submissive in what they are teaching (as men should be!).

Indeed, I would go further, and suggest that God is looking for spiritual dads and mums as leaders in the church. Both exercise leadership together, both take some role of authority, as in the family, and both work together for the advancement of the kingdom and the growth of the church.

At the end of the day, however, it seems to me that someone has to assume responsibility for the family, and, even if men and women work together as an effective partnership, 1 Timothy 3 seems to indicate that ultimately, a man must manage his own family well, if he is to be appointed as leader within the church. Effective fatherhood is a qualification for eldership. It is true that fathers and mothers build family together. Elders in the Old Testament were fathers of families, who sat at the city gate, decided on policy for the city, and then went and actioned things in their own family. This is probably why, when churches were established and then came under considerable pressure (Acts 14:22-23), that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them, to protect and care for them, and help them to stand in the face of hardship!

To summarise, I am very clear that all leadership teams in churches should be men and women working together. I believe that men should be appointed as elders, “fathers” in the family of God, but that they should work together with their wives as spiritual dads and mums in the family of God. That role of spiritual headship is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5, as a gift to family and church, and is spoken of in scripture because it is important. Indeed, the spirit of leadership in the church in the New Testament is of mutual submission, interdependence and harmony in working together.

Now to come back to the question we started with in this chapter: I equally believe that men and women should work together on apostolic teams. We absolutely need men and

women to work together as spiritual dads and mums in the ministries that they exercise, but I see the apostolic ministry is a fatherhood role (as stated in Chapter Five above). I believe that this is the Biblical norm. I understand that others want to go further and see women operating with apostolic function, but I am unconvinced from a Biblical and practical point of view. This in no way denies the very effective ministry of some pioneering women. Indeed, I have worked very closely with pioneering women, not least in Poland. There, God used a super lady, Irena, to establish a powerfully anointed church. At a certain point, she sought quite a lot of input from us, and we worked with her and her fellow-leaders very actively. When she wanted to hand on the leadership of this work, she appointed three couples to take the lead, with the men being designated as the elders. What God uses as special cases is his privilege; but how he builds has general patterns to it, and we need to follow those. In the scripture, we see women prophesying, engaged in mission, caring for God's people pastorally and teaching the flock while remaining under the authority of the elders and apostles. We want to see this partnership of men and women now, for sure.

I am well aware that this will not satisfy everyone, but this is where I am in my current journey. One thing I discovered in my own family is that fathers can't be mothers, neither can mothers be fathers. I think that this also applies in the life of the church.

Question for reflection

1. How are men and women in my church working together harmoniously to see God's kingdom expand, and all of God's people grow into mature function in Christ?
2. Are there areas which are significantly male or female-dominated? How can we address this imbalance?
3. How can we ensure that everyone knows there is a place for them?
4. *For group discussion:* Does our team include men and women? How do we ensure each person feels heard? If we are honest, are we effective in this?

Pray

Pray that men and women in the church would find a place and a way to express the gifts God has given them.

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