

CREATED

EQUIPPING | Ephesians 4:11–16

God has created each of us with gifts, abilities and creativity. But the question is not simply **what gifts do I have?** Ephesians 4 asks what happens when the whole body of Christ is equipped to use what God has given.

The five-fold ministry

Paul describes five ministries Christ gives to the church. They are often called **APEST**: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd and Teacher. The point is not that every Christian fits neatly into one box. Rather, the church needs the different dimensions of Christ's ministry represented and working together.

A	P	E	S	T
APOSTLE	PROPHET	EVANGELIST	SHEPHERD	TEACHER
Where is God sending us?	What is God saying?	Who needs to hear good news?	Who needs care?	What is true? What does it mean?

APEST is not a personality test. It is a way of thinking about the different dimensions the whole church needs: pioneering and mission, listening and challenge, proclaiming good news, caring for people, and teaching truth.

THE BIG IDEA

The five-fold ministries are not there so a gifted few can do all the ministry. They are given to **equip God's people for works of service**, so that the whole body grows into maturity and each part does its work.

Not five people doing everything

A healthy church is not one where the same few people preach, organise, evangelise, teach and care for everyone else. Equipping changes the question from *"What am I doing?"* to *"Who am I helping?"* Gifted people use what God has given them not only to serve, but to encourage, teach, trust and release others.

The picture Paul gives is a body: different parts, different functions, one body — "joined and held together" as **each part does its work**.

What might change if the church became less about a few people carrying ministry, and more about the whole body being equipped to play its part?

DISCUSSION

Use these questions to reflect on the talk together. You don't need to answer every question — follow the conversation where it is useful.

- 1** Where do you see yourself most naturally contributing to the life of the church — and what gifts or abilities do you think God might have given you that you don't currently use much?
What makes it easy or difficult to recognise those gifts in yourself?

- 2** Of the five gifts focused upon — apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, shepherding and teaching — which do you think your church naturally does well? Which might need more attention?
What difference might it make if that missing dimension became stronger?

- 3** Paul describes the church as a body in which “each part does its work.” What do you think happens to a church when only a small number of people consistently do the work of ministry?
What could help move a church from “a few people doing ministry” to “the whole body being equipped”?

- 4** The talk challenges us to ask not just “What am I doing?” but “Who am I helping?” Who could you encourage, teach, trust or give an opportunity to — and what might that look like in practice?

- 5** What is one gift, ability or area of creativity that you could offer more intentionally for the building up of the church — even if it doesn't feel particularly “spiritual”?
What would taking one small step with that gift look like this week?

ONE SMALL STEP

What is one thing you could do this week to use, develop or help release a gift God has given you?