

## **Spiritual Gifts: Evangelist, Pastor and Teaching / Teacher**

### **A Series on Spiritual Gifts: Part 5**

Some spiritual gifts are presented where the person is not distinguished from their function. This can be understood in the spiritual gifts of evangelist, pastor and teacher.

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who **teaches**, in his **teaching**; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom 12:6-8)

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third **teachers**, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. (1 Cor 12:28)

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors** and **teachers**, (Eph 4:11)

### **Evangelist**

The English translation of “evangelist” is derived from the Greek noun “euangelistēs,” which means “a proclaimer of the gospel.” Because there is little mention of this noun in the New Testament, it is difficult to determine whether it is a church office or simply a description of an activity.

Philip (Acts 6:5; 8:5) is given the title of evangelist (Acts 21:8), and Timothy is encouraged to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5).

While the gospel is recorded in written form (Mark 1:1; Luke 1:1-4), throughout the New Testament, “euangelion” (“good news” or “gospel”) was always used in reference to the oral proclamation of the gospel; the gospel was intended to be shared orally.

Perhaps the features of the spiritual gift of evangelist can be gleaned from observation of Philip. Philip’s title of evangelist appears to reflect the apostolic recognition of his ability (Acts 8:5, 14). And as a Jew, Philip’s venture to share the gospel with Samaritans reflected a deep love for an ethnic group normally shunned by his own race.

### **Pastor**

The English term “pastor” is derived from the Greek noun “poimēn,” which is more accurately translated as “shepherd”. Thus “pastor” is a metaphorical translation with a sense of “leader” or “ruler.” When the spiritual gift of pastor was introduced (Eph 4:11), the church office of “pastor” was not an official title during the first century church.

The imagery of the New Testament shepherd is shaped by the gospels’ portrayal of Jesus as the Messianic Shepherd.

Jesus gathers and leads the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 2:6; 9:36; 10:6; 15:24; Mark 6:34).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays His life down for them (Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27; John 10:1-18).

Jesus portrays the shepherd as a) seeking the lost, b) having a genuine love and devotion to the flock, and c) having a particular concern for their spiritual care. With Jesus charge to Peter to “tend and shepherd His sheep” (John 21:15-17), the shepherd’s responsibilities become that of the pastor.

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While little is said specifically about the spiritual gift of pastor, “poimēn” is often associated with elders (presbyteros) and overseers (episkopos), which provides additional insight and information about the pastor.

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders (**presbyteros**) of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (**episkopos**). Be shepherds (**poimainō**) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:17-28)

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders (**presbyteros**) in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer (**episkopos**) manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Tit 1:5-9)

To the elders (**presbyteros**) among you, I appeal as a fellow elder (**sympresbyteros**) and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds (**poimainō**) of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Pet 5:1-4)

Paul indicates that a pastor is an elder of the church. The Greek term “presbyteros,” translated as “elder,” has the meaning of “age,” “rank,” or “an older man who is no longer a young man.” The reference is in the context of experience and wisdom which entitles them to respect, authority and leadership in contrast to a disparaging comment about their age. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Paul writes with a probable reference to elders:

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. (1 Thess 5:12-13)

Pastors are portrayed as men with wisdom gained from living an abiding life with God and capable of leading and helping others live in a holy manner; thus being a capable teacher is an essential requirement of a pastor (1 Tim 3:2).

As an important position in the church, Paul defines the prerequisites of an elder and pastor (Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4).

He is a man who is blameless and faithful to his wife.

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He is a father of children who are genuine Believers and are not disobedient or misbehave.

His leadership style is not overbearing, quick-tempered, drunken, or violent.

He serves the church, because he is willing and eager and as an example of a Believer serving Jesus Christ. He is not motivated by dishonest gain.

He must be hospitable and loves what is good.

He must be a man who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

He must know Scripture well so as to teach sound doctrine and refute false teachings.

While it is apparent in Titus 1:5-7 that “presbyteros” (elder) is used interchangeably with “episkopos” (bishop), the function of “episkopos” has been long linked with the function of “poimēn” as early as Numbers 27:17 and explicitly in Greek in Acts 20:28.

As overseers, pastors serve the church by leading and making decisions, with loving care and concern, for the benefit of the church (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1).

The requirements for an “episkopos” (bishop) are almost identical to elders:

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1-7)

Thus, as a church office, pastors, elders and overseers / bishops appear to be different titles for the same office. Each title places a different emphasis on the office. Pastors place an emphasis on pastoral care of the church. Elders place an emphasis serving with experience and wisdom, and overseers / bishops place an emphasis on leadership and decision making.

How is the church office different from the spiritual gift of pastor? The answer may lie in Paul’s list of spiritual gifts to the Roman church:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently (**spoudē**); if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Rom 8:6-18)

Paul associates the Greek term “spoudē” with leading, which he sees as a necessary attitude for leaders. “Spoudē” means to “to give all diligence” or “earnestness in accomplishing.” For Paul, pastors must give themselves completely over to the task of leading.

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Perhaps this is the distinction between the spiritual gift and office of pastor. The one gifted would be bestowed the attitude of zeal, diligence, and earnestness to lead with love and concern for the church. For such a gifted man, serving as a pastor is more than just a job.

### **Teaching / Teachers**

Whether in reference to the spiritual gift or not, the Greek verb “didaskō” is the term translated as “to teach.” It’s root word “dek” means to “to accept” or “extend a hand to” and conveys the idea of repeatedly extending a hand for acceptance; in essence, causing someone to accept something. The biblical concept of a teacher is not one who forces his will on a student; instead, it is one who uses a variety of methods to develop a pupil’s knowledge, skill and abilities.

This skill is so vital that the New Testament indicates that all Christians (bond servants of Christ: 1 Cor 7:22; Eph 6:6) should be able to teach (2 Tim 2:24). Implicit throughout the Old and New Testament, the battleground for faith is the mind, and teaching what is true and the truth is the only strategy and armament available (Col 2:6-8; Eph 6:10-18).

The New Testament uses “didaskō” in regards to two subjects:

1. Explaining the basic tenants of faith and doctrine established by the apostles (1 Cor 4:17; 2 Thess 2:15).
2. Explaining how Scripture applies to the lives of Believers and the process of sanctification (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16).

For Paul, the most important requirement for a teacher is that he is a “faithful man” (2 Tim 2:2). Simply knowing the facts of Christian doctrine and sanctification does not qualify a teacher, but rather, one who lives reflecting a trust in those facts.

This requirement of genuine faith is the context of James’ warning to those who desire to be teachers:

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (James 2:24 - 3:1)

The spiritual gift of teaching / teacher bestows two apparent distinctive characteristics:

1. The recipient is taught by God through the Holy Spirit. In contrast to the first century church who learned through oral traditions, those with the spiritual gift of teaching today spend a lot of time reading and studying the Bible. Thus, as the author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit can be seen as speaking through teachers and edifying the church.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (1 Cor 2:12-13)

2. The recipient employs effective teaching methods such that many are able to learn, be edified and be inspired in their life with God.

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