

Dismiss Kids. Welcome Guests.

Same God (Series Slide)

Last Sunday, we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus.... There is no greater news than the news that “JESUS IS ALIVE!” But then what?

When Jesus rose from the dead, his followers thought he was going to restore Israel's kingdom. This was their exact question in Acts 1:6, “Is it time?”

Jesus had a different plan. Jesus would expand his kingdom but not as they *as* expected and not *how* they expected. He would not setup an earthly, visible kingdom YET, but would expand his spiritual kingdom, not through his own presence but through the work of his followers.

That's why Jesus shifted the focus of their question from the future to the present: “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:7-8)

The Book of Acts and the rest of the NT goes on to detail how Jesus empowered his people to accomplish his mission in the world. Over the next 7 weeks, we are going to consider how the “SAME GOD” who empowered Jesus followers in the first century is still empowering us today by his Holy Spirit.

Specifically, we are going to focus on the spiritual gifts he has given us to serve others for their good and advance his mission. We are going to walk through all of the key biblical sections addressing spiritual gifts leading up to Pentecost Sunday on June 5th.

Today, we begin with the...

“APEST Gifts” Ephesians 4:1-16

As we will see, APEST is an acronym for the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers.

As we jump into Ephesians 4:1-16, we are going to see how...

The Point: Jesus gifts each one of us for the good of everyone.

Ephesians 4:1-6 (text displayed)

Summarize...

Ephesians 4:7-10 (text displayed)

There are three truths I want you to see from verses 7-16. The first is this:

1. Jesus gifts us from the place of victory. (4:7-10)

Paul moves from “all of us” in verse 6 to “each of us” in verse 7. He says that everyone who is seeking to “walk worthy” of Christ has been graced with different gifts “according to the measure of Christ's gift.”

There are some important truths I want you to see here.

- Jesus is the giver! Spiritual gifts are not earned. They are graciously given through God's sovereign wisdom. We are saved by grace (go read Ephesians 2:1-10), and we serve by grace. It doesn't mean we can't ask for or pursue different gifts, but ultimately, it is God who decides and distributes his gifts to his people.
- This is true, not only in what we receive but how much we receive of a particular gifting. In other words, some people are graced with a greater measure or degree of effectiveness or power in a particular gift, which does *not* make them better or more valuable, it just means they have a different level of stewardship before God. This also does not mean that we can't grow in our gifting. We should expect to as we exercise our gifts (1 Peter 4:10-11) and fan the flame of the Spirit's fire within us (2 Timothy 1:6).
- We will also see that the church displays the beauty of God through its unified diversity. Different gifts are given to each one of us! Wouldn't Redemption Hill be a boring place if everyone was like me (I didn't say you!)? We all have a unique design. There's no monotony here. Some are incredibly merciful. Others are very generous. Some love to serve. Others will encourage you simply by their presence, much less their words.
- Finally, don't miss the significance of verses 8-10! Jesus empowers us to serve in his triumphant kingdom.
 - Here we have a quotation of Psalm 68:18. The "host of captives" refers to the rulers, authorities that he disarmed and defeated as it says in Colossians 2 and put them "to open shame." Just like ancient kings in battle, Jesus has taken them prisoner, proving they no longer have power.
 - Let me explain: Jesus first descended (in his incarnation) to defeat sin, death, and all demonic forces. *Now he has ascended* back to God, after rising triumphantly from dead. This gives him the right to distribute his power and gifts to his people, so that we will continue his work until he returns.
 - If Christ was still in the grave, there's no victory. No victory, no gifts! And you thought Easter Sunday was last Sunday. :)
- What does this mean for us? We serve others from victory! We can serve with confidence and courage, not cowardice because the victory is ours and Jesus has given us HIS POWER!

Go read all of Psalm 68, and you'll see the connection between Christ giving gifts and what that means for us as we seek to live empowered lives!

"Summon your power, O God, the power, O God, by which you have worked for us. . . . Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people." (Psalm 68:28, 35)

T: But how does the gift his church specifically?

Ephesians 4:11 (text displayed) begins to tell us.

2. Jesus gives us a diverse group of gifted leaders. (4:11)

Paul now moves to give specific examples of how Jesus has distributed his gracious gifts to us. He begins verse 11 with the same language in verse 8, when he says, "And [Jesus] gave..."

What did he give? Paul highlights 5 groups of gifted people who are essential for equipping the church to be all God desires.

- Most of the spiritual gift lists focus on specific gifts given to people (like mercy, or healing, or teaching). Here Paul focuses on gifted people. 1 Corinthians 12 actually captures both specific gifts (in vv. 8-10) and gifted people (also naming apostles, prophets, teachers in v. 28)
- Verse 12 tells us that all five groups of gifted people are used by God *as leaders* in the church because they are given “to equip the saints (ie. God’s people) for the work of ministry.”
- That is why some people refer to the five-fold gifts or five-fold ministries of the church.
- This is important because verse 11 seems to communicate essential roles and functions that must be fulfilled if a church is going to be at her best. I do not believe this is a list of official church “offices” (though you could argue for that), but points us to gifted and essential leaders.

Before I explain each one, I want you to understand that...

- These gifts are not exhaustive. In fact, there are at least 15 other gifts named in the New Testament, which also do not provide a comprehensive list of all spiritual gifts.
- Moreover, because each of these gifted leaders reflect the heart of God and life of Jesus, we *all* will reflect them in greater or lesser degrees.
 - For example, you may not be gifted as an evangelist but may have “an evangelistic heart,” and we know that every Christian is called to tell others about Jesus. You may not be a teacher, but you may *really* love the Bible. We’re all called to meditate on the Word day and night.
 - Ephesians 4 tells us we should all be participating in these fivefold ministries as we are equipped for the work of ministry to reflect the glory of Christ everywhere.

Let’s take a closer look at them one by one.

APEST Gifts:

Apostles: Expand the Mission

- The word “apostle” means “sent one.”
- Often, when we think of apostles, we only think of the Group of 12 apostles of Jesus, who were eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, the authoritative teachers of church (see Acts 2:42), and commissioned by Jesus to proclaim his good news.
- Those, along with (at least) the Apostle Paul, refer to the formal group of Apostles. We could call these “Apostles” with a capital “A.”
- While you can make an argument that apostles are no longer found in today’s church, it seems more plausible that gifted leaders known as “apostles” (with a lower case “a”) still function today.
 - Biblical evidence: We find Paul refer to apostles in at least two different senses, the official group of authoritative eyewitnesses *and* those who are “sent out” by churches to take the gospel into new areas. We find the same Greek word “apostolos,” translated as “messenger,” used in reference to Titus and others in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25. Paul also mentions this gift in 1 Corinthians 12:28.
 - Purpose: Why would Jesus, when he ascended, only give apostles to the church for another generation? Do we not think they are still necessary for the health and expansion of the church in every generation? [It seems the plain reading of Ephesians 4:11 would lead us to expect apostles, as much as prophets, as much as evangelists, shepherds and teachers, are essential for the mission of the church. Speaking of mission...]
 - Missionaries: Where do you find the term missionary in the Bible? You don’t. Well, actually, you do. Right here in Ephesians 4:11. The greek word, “*apostolos*,” or “apostle” translated into the latin root *missio*, which is where we get our word, “missionary.”

- Apostles are “sent ones.” They expanded the mission in the first century and they continue to do so today!
- How are apostles gifts to the church?
 - Apostles extend the gospel into new territory and plant churches.
 - They are full of vision, see the big picture, and dream about the future.
 - They love to start things: new groups, new initiatives, new ministries.
 - They are connectors and influencers. They are not afraid of challenges and often possess the gift of faith.
- They reflect Jesus words, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21)
- Biblical Example: Peter, Paul (Romans 15:20)
- Everyday Reflections: entrepreneurs, innovators, visionaries.
- Key Question: Are people taking the gospel into new areas?
- Warnings:
 - Push too hard or too fast. Apostles are shouting, “Let’s go!!” And everyone else is saying, “We just got here. Take a deep breath!” :)
 - Apostles can take risks without considering wise counsel and compromise the vision to please people.

Prophets: Communicate God’s Heart

- How do prophets function in the church?
 - Prophets know God’s truth and communicate what he reveals.
 - They prioritize listening to God’s voice and serve as his mouthpiece, both what God has revealed in Scripture and what he reveals spontaneously in the moment. Prophets speak with insight.
 - They are concerned with God’s holiness and call people to righteousness & justice.
 - They often challenge the status quo. They not only want to know what people are doing but why they’re doing it.
- They reflect Jesus words, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)
- Biblical Examples: Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Agabus (Acts 21)
- Everyday Reflections: Activists and Many who work in Justice Based Non-Profits.
- Key Question: Are people hearing God’s voice and responding?
- Warnings:
 - Prophets can be prideful, always thinking they are right.
 - Their concern for justice can devolve into mere complaining.

Evangelists: Proclaim the Gospel.

- Evangelists...
 - live to tell the good news. They communicate the gospel regularly and effectively.
 - They love to invite people to follow Jesus in a relatable way. They love to bring people with them to church.
 - They carry a burden not just for their friends and family to know Jesus. They want to see everyone come to experience God’s grace through Christ.

- They reflect Jesus words, “For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)
- Biblical Examples: Philip, the 72 in Luke 10
- Everyday Reflections: Salespeople, Social Media Influencers, Communicators
- Key Question: Are people hearing the gospel and following Jesus?
- Warnings:
 - “They may reduce the message to accepting Christ but neglect discipleship, training people to follow Jesus.”
 - “Their often attractive personalities can intentionally or unintentionally make it about them, more than Jesus.”

Shepherds: Care for the Community

- The word “shepherds” here is also translated “pastors.”
 - Shepherds are caring individuals that create nurturing environments where people can grow as followers of Jesus.
 - They are sympathetic and compassionate, willing to bear others’ burdens. Shepherds provide a calm, safe presence. They will just sit with you when you are hurting.
 - They often provide encouragement and wise counsel.
 - They love small groups and opportunities to connect relationally!
- They reflect Jesus words, “Come to me all who are weary and burdened and find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28)
- Biblical Example: Barnabus, James (the brother of Jesus), and Pastors in the church
- Everyday Reflections: Counselors, Social Workers, and Care-Givers.
- Key Question: Are people being cared for and shown God’s love?
- Warnings:
 - Because they are often so full of grace, they can be hesitant to share truth.
 - Shepherds can become insular, only focused on the needs of those inside the church to the neglect of those outside the church.

T: Closely related to “shepherds” are “teachers.” All shepherds who are pastors, must be able to teach, but not all teachers must serve as pastors. What do teachers do?

Teachers: Explain the Word.

- Teachers teach. :)
 - They excel in explaining the meaning and significance of Scripture for our daily lives.
 - They love to spend time studying and reflecting on Scripture. They get excited about theology, books, and learning environments.
 - They have an ability to synthesize information and communicate it in an understandable way.
 - Teachers are the ones constantly quoting a Bible verse in Community Group. :) You’ll see them teaching classes and leading Bible Studies. They consistently point others back to God’s truth.
- They reflect Jesus words, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” (John 8:32)
- Biblical Example: Ezra, Priscilla & Aquila
- Everyday Reflections: Professors, Teachers, Trainers, Coaches.
- Key Question: Are people going deeper in Scripture and applying it?

- Warnings:
 - Scripture can become an end in and of itself.
 - Teachers can be prone to reduce the Bible to mere head knowledge, rather than words to help us love God and others more.
 - Value head knowledge over life transformation.

These all need one another! Each function “enriches, counterbalances, and corrects the particular bias of each of the others.” (Alan Hirsch)

- Apostles need Shepherds.
- Evangelists need teachers.
- Prophets need everyone! Haha. No, everyone needs everyone!

T: Jesus, in his wisdom and grace, gives us a diverse group of gifted leaders. But why?

Ephesians 4:12-16 (text displayed)

3. Jesus builds his church through spiritual gifts. (4:12-16)

- Why does God gift the church with leaders? “To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for *building* up the body of Christ.”
 - To equip means to “supply what is lacking” We equip by teaching and training and modeling.
 - To equip “who?” the saints. Who is a saint? Anyone who follows Jesus and has been saved by his grace.
 - So who does the work of ministry? Everyone! Who builds up “the body of Christ” the church? Everyone! That’s our job description. We serve in such a way that everyone around us is being built up, strengthened, fortified, made more complete and beautiful and godly.
- You say, “That’s your job, pastor.” God said, “It’s our job.” God does not put the work of ministry in the hands of the spiritual elite. He invites EVERYONE! Somebody say: “That’s me.” (With some conviction, with some excitement, with some passion!) That’s you!!!
- Redemption Hill is not a perfect church, but we are a great church. Why? Because this is happening.
- If RHC is going to be an even greater church in the days to come, it will be because this is happening *all the more with everyone* engaged in the work of the ministry.

T: What are we building for? Look at *verse 13* (we see three phrases that point to one goal)

We build up the church UNTIL... we attain to

1. “The UNITY of the faith *and* of the knowledge of the Son of God.” We have one mind and heart because of our shared trust in Jesus.
2. “TO MATURE MANHOOD” The Greek says, “to a full-grown man” in contrast to a little child. In other words, we are to be spiritually mature, progressing day by day as we “walk” with Jesus.
3. “TO the MEASURE of the STATURE of the FULLNESS of CHRIST.” Jesus is the standard. Here is the greatest miracle (and we believe in miracles, but never forget this greatest miracle!): God is shaping us into the “same image” of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). We talk like him. We love like him. We live like him.

Verses 15-16 tell us this happens as we speak the truth in love. This happens as we work together and stay connected to one another. Why? Look at the end of verse 16: “so that it builds itself up in love.”

Conclusion:

“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

We get to be a part of this! That's what this series is about. The same God who empowered his people in the past is empowering us today!

This is what we see!

BEYOND THE HORIZON VISION STATEMENT (on the new slides pls :)

We see a church full of people gifted by God's Spirit for the good of others. As each person's unique design is discovered, lived, and celebrated with equal excitement, we will collectively take thousands of joyful steps to serve others! Countless deeds of mercy, kindness, hospitality, healing, teaching, encouragement, and more will lead to story after story of the supernatural becoming natural and God's love going public in every corner of our church and city. Redemption Hill will be a church where everyone lives empowered everywhere!

Pray.