

APEST

EMBRACING A PLURALITY OF ECCLESIOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Eph. 4:4 - There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."
⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Introduction:

While we embrace a single "pastor" model of leadership in our current, protestant ecclesiology, we read in Ephesians 4 there is a plurality of equippers in the early church. There is a unique gifting paradigm that specifically lists 5 descriptions associated with the "gift of Christ." The scriptures then go on to mention they are necessary for maturity to take place among the saints.

Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" and for the purpose of "building up the body of Christ." These aspects of Christ's body will be present "until we all attain the...fullness of Christ."

While there are a number of voices contributing to this discussion who have defined the APEST gifting with various descriptions, they typically have a similar core understanding:

- **APOSTLE:** Literally the "sent ones" who advance the Gospel into new territories (geographically and generationally) and cultures. They are "parenting" figures establish church communities by creating disciples (spiritual sons/daughters) to cultivate the community as they move on to new endeavors.
- **PROPHET:** The "ones who hear and listen to God." Those who forth-tell *and* foretell. They are concerned with hearing from God and calling people into action on behalf of the message (often calling out sin or "next steps"). They are usually pioneer thinkers who envision a future for the church (which the church cannot see yet) and points toward it.

- **EVANGELIST:** The “ones who bring good news” to the world. Those who proclaim the Gospel in word and deed as they engage the world. They contagiously recruit people to believe in God and join in on the cause of the Kingdom.
- **SHEPHERD:** The “ones who shepherd people.” Those who are especially burdened with caring for God’s people. They place a special focus on unity, protection of the sheep, and they point people towards the green pastures of nurturing relationships.
- **TEACHER:** The ones who “seek and share truth.” Those who teach the scriptures and seek deep understanding of biblical truth and the application of it in our lives. They are the champions of “correct” doctrine and are sensitive to protecting the church community from false doctrine.

Base and Phase (3DM):

The scriptures say, “grace was given to **each one of us** according to the measure of Christ’s gift...some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers.” Mike Breen (of 3DM) says that each person operates in one of these of the five categories as a base. This base is where we typically operate but, given different circumstances, we have phases wherein we act according to a different aspect of the APEST to accomplish a goal.

All Called to Maturity:

The purpose of each person is to express their gifts in a way that inspires others to put them into practice. ALL are called to act in all five aspects of the gifting and, while each of us are naturally drawn towards one or two, we are responsible to embrace each aspect. In essence, we do not hog the gift or become the representative for our communities on their behalf but are responsible to teach and equip all people to express the fivefold gift of Christ. According to Ephesians 4, any church that does not represent all five aspects APEST in their leadership cannot be brought to maturity and, as a result, are not healthy ecclesiological expressions.

Pioneers and Developers:

APOSTLE	PROPHET	EVANGELIST	SHEPHERD	TEACHER
Pioneers think of the future and plant new endeavors.		Could go either way.	Developers water the seed and cultivate the community.	

Four Views on APEST:

Like many topics, it’s a good idea to get various viewpoints to develop a comprehensive view (kind of like the four gospels!). Check out the resources below to

- Jeff Vanderstelt ([SOMA](#) – great 30min overview on APEST)
- Mike Breen ([Book Excerpt](#) & [Short/Free APEST Gift Profile](#))
- Alan Hirsch ([Forgotten Ways](#) & [Conference Teaching](#))
- Neil Cole (Church Multiplication Associates - [Primal Fire book](#) & [Question and Answer](#))