

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

Meet me, please, at Ephesians Chapter 4, where we are continuing in this wonderful section—the first part of the practical-application half of the Book of Ephesians—where the theme is "unity" all the way from Verse 1 to Verse 16. We are instructed here to "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (vss. 1, 3; NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

This passage does not call us to *create* unity in Christ, because we *can't*; it's not a manmade thing, it is "the unity of the *Spirit*"—it's the work of the Spirit of God, making us "one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28), "all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), all "receiving the" same "Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:17; cf. Rom. 8:9). But we are to be "diligent to *preserve*" that "unity" (e.g., Rom. 12:16; 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:2; Col. 3:14).

As we work our way through this, I have emphasized to you several times that "unity" is the key, or the theme, to Verses 1 through 16. Today, as we arrive at Verse 11, we come to another one of those marvelously precise sentences from the inspired pen of the Apostle Paul. I haven't taken the trouble to count the words here yet—I'll probably do that this week—but from Verse 11 through Verse 16 is one Greek sentence. You'll see that our translation, like many English translations, breaks it into two sentences in English because the subtlety of the nuances of the syntax of English are not as sophisticated as they are in Greek. But I'll show you how it all fits together.

Today, we're going to just introduce to you the Unity Team Leaders—the ones whom God has designed and placed within His plan for the Church in order for it to live as "the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12; cf. Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Col. 3:15). The roster of this team only has four positions, and they are as follows; they're all in the one verse that we are going to look at this morning: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and then Pastors And Teachers. Now, I can count, and I know the word "and"—it looks like that Number 4 is two different things; when we get there, I'll show you why it is not.

And I'll also admit a certain amount of discomfort about coming to the passage that requires that I preach on what I am supposed to do; that can sound a little strange, and trust me—it has a certain share of discomfort that goes along with it. But our job is to teach what *God* says, so we will teach you what is in this passage.

We need to have the kind of ministry that is described in Ephesians 4:11-16. It is *not* optional. This *is* God's design for His Church—this church and every other local manifestation of the Church, the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17). We have to have the right priorities. We have to put the right people in the right positions of influence to produce the work that needs to be done (1 Tim. 3:1-12; Titus 1:6-9), because the Ministry is the responsibility of *all* of the congregation—*not just* the leaders; the leaders doing their job rightly causes others to do their jobs as they must (1 Tim. 4:12).

I want to share some interesting statistics with you. These are not fresh, this is not my research; this is actually a number of years old, but I doubt the numbers have changed much, if at all. It was an extensive bit of surveying done a number of years ago by the

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

Institute for American Church Growth. They asked 10,000 people who were committed to a local church: "What led you to be involved in your church? What was the *main* emphasis that brought *you* to the point of making a commitment to fulfill a role in the local church?"

What they found was: "A special need" was 2 percent; that's like a crisis, an accident, an illness—something like that, and Christians responding. "Walk-in"—just, see a door, walk in, come and visit: 3 percent. "The pastor": 6 percent. "Visitation": 1 percent; that's people specifically going out and visiting homes of unbelievers. "Sunday School": 5 percent. "Evangelistic Crusade": 0.5 percent. "Programs of the church": 3 percent. And, "The influence of a friend or a relative": 79 percent.

Based on those numbers—even if they are a little bit off—you are approximately 13 times more likely than I am to be used by God to lead someone to come to the kind of commitment to Christ that is demonstrated in their ongoing involvement with the local church. So we need to know *what* God wants us to be in order to *be* the kind of people who have that kind of influence (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:17). We have to know what God requires pastors to do (Acts 20:28); and you're going to see that He requires that we be involved with "equipping the saints" (vs. 12), so we need to find out what it means to be equipped saints, so that we can serve as God would have us to serve.

So, we're going to look at this kind of slowly today. We are not even going to quite finish Verse 11, but then we will get on with it after that.

But look at these Unity Team Leaders as we find them in Ephesians Chapter 4, Verse 11—"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers..."

Now, before I even start the list of them, would you notice that it begins with the word "and"—this is directly connected to what we studied last time in Verses 7 through 10. That told us about what Jesus did after He died and before He rose from the grave. In His spirit, He went and He brought the Old Testament saints into the presence of God; and then it says, "And He gave gifts to men," and then this verse starts with "and"—"and" He did something else.

In the imagery of what is described in Verses 8 through 10, remember: that involved a quote from Psalm 68 which is an allusion to the custom of a conquering, victorious general returning from battle and being honored in the parade; and he would lead captives who had been captured from the enemy. Well, that is adapted to what Jesus did: *Jesus* went, and He got those who were captive to death—they were in the Old Testament place of believers (Lk. 16:22)—and He brought them into the presence of God. You could not come into the presence of God until your sins had been atoned for (Ps. 5:4); your sins were not atoned for until "Christ died for [your] sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3; cf. Heb. 10:10). So, that's what He did; He led them back, but He didn't bring them back as *His* prisoners—He brought them into the presence of God, setting them free from the place that they had been.

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

And then, He did something *infinitely* better, because in that picture of the returning general, the *general* receives the gifts, which are the spoils of the battle; but *Jesus*, instead of taking these things for Himself—I mean, you could say those people are His people, but "He" then "gave gifts to men." And it literally says: "He *Himself* gave"—it is emphatic in declaring that Jesus gives gifts to *each one* who is a member of His Body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10).

Then you get to that "and" at the beginning of Verse 11. Not only did He give gifts to *each one* that He redeemed; also, He *gives certain gifted individuals* to the Church for the purpose of fulfilling His plan for His Bride to be what she is supposed to be. God sovereignly places certain people in key positions (e.g., Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15-16).

So, some people read this rather sloppily, and they see: "Well, 'He gave gifts to men,' and, 'He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets'—therefore: There's a spiritual gift of 'apostle,' or a spiritual gift of 'prophet,' or 'evangelist,' or 'pastor and teacher.' " The text doesn't say that. The grammar of the passage does not allow that.

These four groups of people are *categories* of men that God has given gifts to, and then He has "placed" them in the Body (1 Cor. 12:18). And it's four distinct groups; the Greek literally says: "*the* apostles...*the* prophets...*the* evangelists...*the* pastors and teachers"—they are specifically called by God.

So, let's dive in. Number 1 on the list: Apostles. "And He gave some as apostles..."—literally: "*the* apostles."

Now, let me show you that this is a case where you *almost* know a Greek word that you didn't know that you knew. The Greek word for "apostle" is *apostolos*. It's not a translation. The Greek verb *apostellō* means: "to send with a commission," or, "to send with a message," "to send with instructions." The one who *does* that is the *apostolos* (e.g., Jude 17).

"Apostle" is *not* a translation of that word; it's a *transliteration*—that's where you just take the letters from the Greek alphabet, match them up to the most corresponding letters in the English alphabet, and you invent a new word.

We saw it back a little bit earlier in the chapter; they did that with "baptism." That's not a translation! If you're going to translate it, it means: "immersion"! If only they had *translated* it, instead of *transliterating* it, we wouldn't have any battles about how to baptize people, because that's what the word means. So here, we have another non-translated word...but, we have to live with it.

What do we mean by "apostles"? Well, it's "someone who is sent with a commission." Now, to be named among the Apostles required meeting certain criteria; and it's not just, "If you meet the criteria, you're automatically there," but what we can say is: Those whom Jesus placed as Apostles all meet these criteria.

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

First and foremost: They are commissioned directly by Christ (Mk. 3:13-14; Gal. 1:1). Now, that *can be* a rub if you want to talk about "Matthias" (Acts 1:26), who replaced Judas; I'll talk about him a little bit more in the end, but he was with the original disciples from the beginning (Acts 1:21-22). Remember, on that fateful day when Jesus stayed up all night praying, and then in the morning before He preached the Sermon on the Mount, what did He do? He "named" the "twelve disciples," "whom He also named as apostles" (Lk. 6:13). So, there was a group of disciples—*very committed* disciples—and He chose 12 of them.

They had to also be eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1). In their ministry, they received special inspiration from God (Jn. 14:26; 16:13), and so they became the ones who had the supreme authority in the Church (Lk. 10:16; Jn. 13:20; 15:20; 1 Cor. 14:37-38; 1 Thess. 4:2; 1 Jn. 4:6). You read Acts Chapter 2—"they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42, NKJV). So they were the ones who were foundational to the teaching of the Church (Eph. 2:20).

And these men were furnished with ample credentials to validate their apostleship by means of "signs and wonders" (Acts 4:30). Second Corinthians Chapter 12 is where Paul refers to "the signs of a true apostle" (vs. 12); they were things unique to the Apostles.

Jesus named 12, but there came to be a problem: Judas Iscariot abdicated his position among the Apostles (Acts 1:25). And interesting: After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended, in Acts Chapter 1, the earliest group of disciples of Christ that were gathered felt it was crucial to replace Judas; and so, a man named Matthias was appointed to fill Judas's spot. Now, there is some debate over whether that appointment was actually the will of Christ, or whether it was something that was just done by those men out of their own sense of need.

So you can say there are either 12 Apostles: the 12 Jesus chose, minus Judas, plus Matthias...and then there's Paul—so there are 12 or 13. And if you don't want Matthias, then it can be the 12, minus Judas, plus Paul. Let's just say: I don't think it's going to be on the entrance exam to get into Heaven, whether you can count to 13 or if you only have to count to 12.

What we *do* know is that Paul was different from the rest. Paul was *not* with Jesus from the very beginning; he didn't come to know the Lord until that experience on the Damascus Road in Acts Chapter 9 (1 Cor. 15:8). In Ephesians Chapter 3, Verse 7, Paul described himself as distinct from the other Apostles; and in addition to them, he was an Apostle with a *special* commission to go to the Gentiles (vs. 8; cf. Rom. 1:5; 11:13; Gal. 2:8; 1 Tim. 2:7). It's a fascinating discussion to have.

There is a view held by some Bible believers that says that the appointment of Matthias was a mistake. If you were here when our friend Justin Peters was here last time, he mentioned that in a Q-and-A session—that he holds to that view. I think Justin is saved; and I think you can get to Heaven without agreeing with me on that.

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

But *I* think that Matthias was chosen (cf. Matt. 19:28). You can say that it wasn't God's will; but to do that, you have to make an argument 100 percent from silence, *and* you have to *read into* the text of Acts Chapter 1 things that are not there. If you *take the text for what it says*, it describes a legitimate process of making an important decision that was extant among the Jews—and all of the believers at that time were Jews. So I think Matthias is legit; I think there are 13.

But that doesn't fully cover the study of "apostles." There is also a small group—*very* small group—that are listed with Apostles sometimes, but you can't call them "Capital-A" Apostles: "the Twelve" (Mk. 3:16; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor. 15:5); you would have to call them "small-a" apostles. That group would include Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James (Gal. 1:19)—not either of the Jameses that are among the Twelve, but James, the Lord's half-brother (Matt. 13:55), who wrote the Book of James and who presided over the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:9, 12); the group would include Silas, also called Silvanus (1 Thess. 1:2; 2:5-6); there are two men in that category mentioned in Romans 16:7 about which we know almost nothing: Junias and Andronicus; and also Jude, the half-brother of the Lord, who wrote the Book of Jude (Matt. 13:55; Jude 1).

Now, they are called "apostles," but remember: "Apostle" is not a translation; "apostle" means "a messenger"—a specially-commissioned messenger; so, they could be "messengers"—or, "apostles"—"of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23). They were highly regarded by the churches, they were entrusted with care of things to do with the churches, but they were not "Capital-A Apostles." I see a legitimate distinction there: The Apostles chosen by Christ (Gal. 1:1; cf. "Apostle of Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet; 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1), and those very few so designated by the Church.

And in either case, the more important consideration is: There is *no evidence anywhere in the Bible* for the idea of the "succession" of Apostles from one generation to another (see Rev. 21:14). Apostleship was a specific group of people in a specific time for a specific purpose (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1). It was *not* the beginning of a relay race and a baton passed on from generation to generation. *There are no Apostles today!*

There are a *number* of heretical groups in this generation who say: "And that's the problem! *We need Apostles today!*" And so, there are people trying to reinvent Apostles today. There's a movement known as the "NAR"—the "New Apostolic Reformation"—and they are believing that God is now raising up a new generation of Apostles.

And there are similar mindsets among nearly every bizarre group within the fringes of the Charismatic Movement and the Word Faith Movement. I just checked yesterday, and I verified that you can go online and get training to become an "Apostle"! It takes two months—*two months*, mind you! I refused to click any further and see how much it costs; I was afraid my e-mail address might be captured. It is absolute *silliness*—it's theological *fantasyland*! It's *denying* 1,900 years of absolute *consensus* among the Body of Christ, to say that we are making new Apostles today (cf. Matt. 24:11; 2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2).

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

I would say, as a rule of thumb, it is wise for you to ignore and/or run away from *anything* in this generation that you see has the term "apostolic" attached to it—unless they're using it in the sense of "Apostolic Doctrine," like the "teaching" of the "Apostles" (Acts 2:42). Everything else that has "apostolic" on it, you can be about 99.9 percent sure it's going to be Ultra-Charismatic bad theology that you won't want to be part of.

Alright, that's The Apostles. The second position group on this team: Prophets. Ephesians 4:11—"He gave some as apostles, and some as *prophets*..."

Now, remember how I just told you that the word "apostle" is not a translation; it came into English by *transliterating* from the Greek alphabet to the other; the real meaning is: "one sent with a commission."

And it creates some ambiguity that we have this transliterated, invented word, rather than the translated *meaning* of a word. Well, guess what? You *also* know the Greek word for "prophet"! Do you want to guess it?—*prophētēs*. They didn't *translate* it, they *transliterated* it—took it from the Greek alphabet into the English alphabet.

There is a verb and a noun form of it, as you might not be surprised by. The verb form comes with the preposition *pro*—we have that in English as "for"—and *phēmi*, one of the verbs for "speaking." So it literally means: "to speak before." And when you say that, a lot of people think, "Oh, yeah, 'Prophet'—they tell things that happen before they happen." Well, a *tiny fraction* of the Biblical work of prophets is when God gives revelation about something that hasn't happened yet. Predictive Prophecy—it is a real thing; come on Wednesday nights, and we're right in the thick of it in Daniel Chapter 2. And God never gets it wrong—He tells exactly what is going to happen.

But the basic meaning of the word—if you were going to *translate* it instead of *transliterating* it—would be something much more like "spokesman," singular or plural: "one who speaks forth to others." These are people whom God used in speaking ministries, empowered by "the Holy Spirit" (Acts 28:25).

From what little is said about them in the New Testament, what we can ascertain—if we are going to distinguish between "Apostles" and "Prophets"—the Prophets seem to have worked primarily in one local place, in one local congregation; whereas the Apostles were sent to specifically *spread* the Word (Acts 1:8; Rom. 15:20-21). So, one is more travelling; one is more local. That pretty much fits the data that we have.

So these are not "sent ones"; they would "speak forth" the "Apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42, NKJV), and they would edify the body of believers (e.g., Acts 13:1; 15:32). God specifically used them in that era when the Church of Jesus Christ was being started, and the Scriptures were not completed yet. You have the Apostles receiving the revelation and some of them writing it down for us, which becomes the New Testament Scripture; and in the meantime, you have these "spokesmen" who speak according to those words (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37).

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

And when you read what is required of the prophets, they didn't specifically say, "The Lord says this to you"; they taught what was bring said, and their message was to be judged by the other prophets (1 Cor. 14:29). They were accountable to each other to make sure that together, the prophets would compare what they taught with what the Apostles taught and wrote, so that there would be uniformity and accountability. They had to conform to the teaching that was extant, both Old Testament Scripture (Is. 8:20) and what was, at that time, received from the Apostles (2 Pet. 3:2).

If there was *any* sense in which [New Testament] Prophets received divine revelation—we don't know of them being used by God to write down new revelation, but we know that it was ended with the completion of the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8).

Now, to stick with the historical context—which we must *always* do—we should take this reference to the teaching of the Apostles and Prophets—in *light of* what Paul has already said in the previous chapter about connecting *his* ministry with the ministry of *all* of the Apostles with the ministry of Jesus with the work of God begun long, long ago. There is this seamless connection from the Old Testament era to the New Testament era, and a significant part of that connection is the ministry of the Apostles and Prophets.

What am I referring to? Well, you have to think back a couple of months ago. We were in Chapter 3, and Paul wrote what we saw there—he was talking about the "mysteries": there's the kingdom program of God; there are "mysteries," things that were not known before that are now being made known—and he says this: "By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, *as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit*" (vss. 4-5; cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:26). My friends, we are not part of something brand new (Acts 26:22); we are part of something *gloriously old*! This is the kingdom program of God, begun in—well, let's say Genesis Chapter 1 (cf. Gen. 3:15). Now, we're in a different *era* of it than had been before, but the *connection* is the things "made known" through "His holy apostles and prophets." And there, Paul tightly connects himself to all of the other Apostles. So, how many are there? I say 13; you can say 12—and I'll meet you at the gates of Heaven.

Jesus announced the inauguration of "the New Covenant" (Lk. 22:20)—remember that? Some of you have been attending a church where there has been a *wonderful series* on the Covenants of God recently, culminating in the New Covenant. Jesus announced the inauguration of the New Covenant the night before He went to the Cross; and from then on, the details of this recently unfolded—or, last to be unfolded—era of the Kingdom of God has been revealed, made known, written down, proclaimed by the Apostles and Prophets, and the essentials of it stand written forever for us in the New Testament.

Now, as I said, it seems that while the Apostles travelled a great deal, the prophets were probably more limited to one location—at least one at a time; there's just not evidence of them travelling from place to place. But understand this: These two—Apostles and Prophets—were *foundational* to the Church.

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

Again, we don't even have to go out of the context; let's stay here in the Book of Ephesians. Go back one more chapter, to Chapter 2, Verses 19 and 20. There, Paul says: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens"—that's terminology of Gentiles in relationship to Jews (e.g., Lev. 19:34); but he's saying, "We are all one body now in Christ"—"You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone."

Christ is the ultimate foundation, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). In this analogy here, He is "the chief corner stone" (Matt. 21:42)—that's the first stone of the foundation that is laid; it is laid with perfect precision, and all measurements of all dimensions and directions within the rest of the building come in relation to the "chief corner stone."

So, He is "the chief corner stone"; "the apostles and prophets" laid the "foundation" of truth that was revealed by Christ for the Church (Jn. 15:20b). Everything preached by them—and especially, everything *written* by them, inspired by the Holy Spirit for the New Testament—that's part of the foundation of the Church, the Body of Christ (Col. 1:24).

Now, there was a lot more that they *said*, and a lot more that they wrote (e.g., Col. 4:16); but we have preserved for us the inscripturated writings from: Matthew—he's one of the Twelve; Mark—he would be one of the "small-a" apostles, very closely associated with Peter; we have Luke—another "small-a" associate of the Apostles, who wrote Luke and Acts; we have the Apostle John—he was a rock star, he wrote *five* books of the New Testament; we have Paul, that later addition to the Apostles—he wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament; we have James—another "small-a" apostle guy; we have Peter—he wrote 2 books, and he and Paul referred back and forth to each other as colleagues in this whole process (Gal. 1:18; 2 Pet. 3:15); we have Jude, another "small-a" apostle, half-brother of Jesus; and, whoever wrote the Book of Hebrews. If you want to argue about whether Matthias ought to be in or not, just argue about who wrote the Book of Hebrews; you could have a whole lot more splits in your denomination, deciding your opinion on that. I just can't wait to meet him—got some questions!

I think it's quite logical to say—and this meets with the consensus of the history of Christian Theology—Apostles and Prophets are now replaced by Evangelists and Teaching Pastors. There is no *succession* of Apostles (cf. Rev. 21:14)—by implication, no succession of the Prophets.

And when I say that, here is the evidence for that: We read Ephesians 2:20. You don't put a "foundation" on the 21st floor of a building! There is *one* foundation, *one* foundational generation, *one* foundational generation of the theologians. The last time that we have *any* record of the Apostles and Prophets ever coming together is Acts Chapter 15. Well, that's *pretty early* in the Church; that's *right after* Paul's First Missionary Journey. Then as a group, they disappeared completely—except, of course, we have Paul's ministry recorded, and his writings, and the writings of Peter and the writings of John. And all their functions were assumed by others in the Church.

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

So, God gives *every member of His Body*—to each one of us, He has given gifts (1 Cor. 12:7, 18, 25; 1 Pet. 4:10); God places certain gifted men into certain roles in the Church. So there's not a *gift* of an Apostle, there's an Office of Apostle; there's not a *gift* of Pastor/Teacher, there's an Office of Pastor/Teacher, etc.

Now, there is a little bit of wiggle room here; there's a little bit of ambiguity here. There *are* people who love the Lord and His Word as much as I do, who would say that what I am doing now, by preaching in this manner—where I am speaking before a group of people, and it's a one-way address—they say that is an example of the Gift of Prophecy, because I am "speaking forth" what God has written in His Word, and I am exhorting His people to learn and obey what He says. I'm okay, if somebody wants to say that.

I tend to put the Gift of Prophecy in the category of those things that passed with the Apostles (1 Cor. 13:8). But again, there is some ambiguity. I would call it "teaching." And I would say that the difference between teaching and preaching is not the difference between one gift and another gift, because the content is *always* the same—it always needs to be the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2, 13). I say it has mainly to do with whether it is dialogue or proclamation. If a group of three of us is sitting down, I'm not going to stand up, open my Bible, and preach to you; we're going to sit down and *talk* about the Scriptures, and it'll be a two-way communication.

And the other category is: How many people are involved? So, is it dialogue or is it proclamation, and is it a larger group or a smaller group? And I don't think it's a cut-and-dried, clear line. Every spiritual gift, exercised properly, is *always* going to be checked by others who compare what a person says with the Word of God (1 Thess. 5:21).

Okay, we have two more positions, and not very much time. Let's look at the rest of the team here. What about the Evangelists? "And He gave some as [the] apostles, and some as [the] prophets, and some as [the] *evangelists*..."

It is unfortunate that this word "evangelist" conjures up an image today that is probably rather far-removed from the New Testament. And guess what? It is a word that came *directly* from the Greek by *transliteration*! The root is *euangelion*, or, "good news"—the "evengalion," the "evangel." The word means "good news." These are the "Good-Newsers"—these are the ones who take the "Good News" somewhere. It's not *precisely* a transliteration, but it's right there.

When you think of an "evangelist" today, you probably think of a guy on TV; or you think of a guy with 25 suits and 25 sermons and 25 hairdos, who comes to town for a week or two, and gathers all the people that he can, and preaches "fire and brimstone," and it ends up in singing "Just As I Am" over and over while he names every sin anybody in the group could have ever committed; until finally, some people come forward, they sign the roles, and say, "Look how many came to Christ!"—and then they vanish. Remember that percentage of how many people came to be committed to their local church through evangelistic events? 0.5—and I think that was bigger in those days than it would be now.

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

That's not to say it's *wrong* to do evangelism! We've just helped our Russian friends to *a lot of it!* But *they* tell you: That particular ministry accounts for the first contact of the Gospel with *half* of the people that are in their churches now who have been baptized since the fall of Communism. A "system" is just a tool; the point is: what is said there.

But when we think about Evangelists, what *do* we mean? What *should* we mean? Well, it basically means: "travelling missionaries." As I said, if Apostles and Prophets have been replaced by Evangelists and Teaching Pastors, the significance would be: Evangelists are those who take the Gospel—take the message—new places (cf. Rom. 15:20-21; 1 Cor. 3:6, 10).

So, "Church Planters"—or, "Missionaries," we tend to call them, especially if they cross cultural barriers. They are people who take the Good News. We have some in the New Testament: "Philip" did that (Acts 21:8); Philip started out as one of the Deacons named in Acts Chapter 6. "Timothy" did some of this when he was part of the team of the Apostle Paul (Acts 16:1-3). So did "Titus" (2 Cor. 8:23). So did "Barnabas" (Acts 13:2).

And though he was an Apostle, Paul *always* did what an Evangelist does: He always preached the Gospel and planted churches. And when Paul wrote his very last letter, to Timothy, in Second Timothy Chapter 4, Verse 5, Paul told Timothy—who at that time was a Pastor in Ephesus—he said part of your job is to "do the work of an evangelist."

So it's not like they are *distinct jobs*; but those who take it to new places, we call them "evangelists"—or, "missionaries"; those who stay put in one place, we call them "pastors and teachers."

So, that brings us to Number 4: Pastors and Teachers. "And He gave some as [the] apostles, and some as [the] prophets, and some as [the] evangelists, and some as [the] *pastors and teachers.*"

And I'm going to spare myself for one more week, having to tell you what the Bible says that I am supposed to do. I'm going to stop here. I'm going to pause our progress in the text for today, for a very important reason.

I've been giving you definitions, and making fun of words, and all kinds of details here. *Why* all this detail and precision with all of this stuff? I want to slap us into the world of personal application, and help us see how important this is. I don't care if you can spell *prophētēs* or *apostolos*, or even say the words with any sort of accuracy or not. What's all this about?

I told you this is the beginning of one of those glorious sentences; and this is the beginning of the description of God's plan for us—for Heritage Bible Church. And I want to ask all of us to seriously consider: Am I on board with this plan? Is this *my* plan? Is this *my* desire? Is this how *I* pray for my church? Is this how *I* want to serve in my church?

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

So I want to read this whole sentence to you, and I hope it whets your appetite to think about it, for the next time we come to this text.

It's Ephesians 4:11-16—"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers"—now here's the spoiler—"for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

I said earlier: We, the leadership at Heritage Bible Church, are working on some long-range plans to improve things, to be more efficient with the use of space, to make more opportunities for doing just what this text says. And I just quipped earlier, "That's going to depend on *all of us*! We need to *add* to the team! We need *more* people doing *more* things—and more people doing more things more *tenaciously*."

My friends, when we talk about "the ministry," some people think, "Well, you're 'in the ministry.' " Yeah, I am. But, you know what? "The ministry" belongs to *you*. It belongs to *all of us*. *You* are key to building up the Body of Christ! Our job is *not done* until *every member of Christ's Body is mature in the faith*. And the whole process depends on that which "every joint supplies." And wait till I tell you how that relates to you. So, I want to ask you: Besides all the transliterations and all the details, are you on board?

So I'm going to close with this. Suppose that you were told to publicly renounce your faith in Jesus Christ, or you would be killed. You would start thinking about your priorities, and that would quickly reveal what is in your heart (e.g., Rev. 12:11b). I want to conclude today by reading to you something written by a man who was given that choice. He was a man in Africa. One source—the friend who sent this to me yesterday—says this was written by a Rwandan man in 1980; but others say, no, it's actually much older than that, and that it came from a pastor in what we know as Zimbabwe, who was martyred over a hundred years before. Either way, we can narrow it down to *somewhere* in the bottom half of the continent of Africa, and a Christian—probably a pastor—who was arrested and told to renounce Christ, or he would die. Well, he did not renounce Christ, and he died; and among his precious papers, this was found. Just let it speak to you.

It's called "The Fellowship Of The Unashamed." This brother wrote: "I am part of the 'Fellowship of the Unashamed.' The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure.

Sermon Title: Unity Team Leaders
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:11 (Ephesians #23)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 12-5-21

"I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals.

"I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I now live by presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power. My pace is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, deterred, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed.

"I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I must go until Heaven returns, give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes. And when He comes to get His own, He will have no problem recognizing me. My colors will be clear."

Let's pray:

Father, we have gathered as Your people. We are all in various stages of maturity and immaturity. We are all continuing to battle the flesh. But Lord, please help us to resonate with the words of this brother, that we want to be known as part of the "Fellowship Of The Unashamed." Yes, Lord, we need to live our lives—we need to pay bills and cook meals and raise children and care for things; and all of that is so much a part of living. But, what is the purpose in living, if we don't understand that we will live for eternity, and that there are only two options for where that will be, for us and for all whom we know. So Father, make us, if You will, part of the Fellowship of the Uncompromising, so that we might be what You would intend us to be. Help us to be on board with what You want to do for Your glory through Heritage Bible Church, using each one of us. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.