

Ephesians 4:11-16

Ephesians *Who's The Minister?*

The ad reads, "Become ordained here today and begin your own ministry! As a legally ordained minister, you may perform weddings, funerals, baptisms and other functions of the clergy. In existence since 1959, the Universal Life Church is headquartered in Modesto, California, and has congregations around the world. The sun never sets on the Universal Life Church. ULC ministers come from all walks of life and spiritual traditions.

Our common thread is our adherence to the universal doctrine of religious freedom: "Do only that which is right". Every person has the natural right (and the responsibility) to peacefully determine what is right. We are advocates of religious freedom. The Universal Life Church wants you to pursue your spiritual beliefs without interference from any outside agency, including government or church authority. You may become a legally ordained minister for life, without cost, and without question of faith. "Become Ordained Now"

I figured, "How could you beat that" so I signed up. I was approved so now I'm a minister of the Universal Life Church. I'd show you my ordination certificate but that was \$5.00 and I didn't want to send them my money.

You can also order photo wallet cards, press passes, marriage certificates, Affirmation of Love Certificates (The official certificate of the church for use with commitment ceremonies for couples who cannot become legally married.), Doctor of Divinity, Doctor of Metaphysics, Doctor of Motivation, Doctor of Immortality degrees, and my all time favorite, Certificate of Sainthood.

What's really interesting to me is that of the 123 times the word "minister" is used in our English Bibles it's never used the way we tend to use it today. If you have a number of people on staff at a church someone might ask, "How many ministers do you have at that church?"

Actually, the pastor of a church is not "The minister." The word "minister" in our New Testament is usually the translation of the Greek word *diakonos*, from which we get deacon, and literally means "servant."

Men we call Pastors are really servants among many servants. The ministry is really a joint effort. It's the responsibility and privilege of every believer in a church.

This morning as we prepare to look into the biblical explanation of ministry in the church I'd like you to think about this question, "Am I a minister at Faith Community Church?"

Not, do you have ordination credentials and "Reverend" in front of your name, but Are you a minister in the biblical sense of the word.

Last time we were in Ephesians we saw there is unity in the church because spiritually we all belong to one body, we're all indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, we all acknowledge one Lord, and we all worship one God. We also saw that on an every-day, practical level that unity can be easily broken.

We're all still sinners. Through Christ we're believing sinners, forgiven sinners, but we're still sinners.

And because we're sinners with feelings that get hurt and pride that likes to take over, there will be times of conflict and selfishness on the individual level.

God's plan is this, that the unity that exists on the level of what we profess to believe also exist in our daily relationships.

In order to preserve that unity God has gifted us with abilities that allow us to serve one another.

And Jesus Christ, who triumphed over death and the grave is the one who gives those gifts.

But now, just having God-given abilities is not enough. If those abilities are going to help anybody they have to be used.

So God has not only given spiritual abilities to each individual believer, He's also given gifted men to the church to develop and give direction to those individuals.

Open Bible to Ephesians 4 page 1040

I. God Has Given Gifted Men To The Church to Equip Believers

Read vs 11 (through 'saints' in vs 12)

God is a God of order. That's why scientists can study the physical universe. A Creator God made the world and everything operates by natural laws.

That same God is the Lord of the church and so there's order there too.

The church is often referred to in the New Testament by the metaphor of a body. A body that's functioning properly is coordinated.

Isn't it amazing to watch a gymnast go through their routines? I don't know if you could even begin to count the number of electrical impulses that are shooting out of the brain to the various muscles and back again.

That's a creation of God. That didn't happen by chance.

And it's a beautiful thing when the church as a creation of God acts in a coordinated manor.

An athlete trains. There's practice and lots of hard work. The church is the same way. Unity isn't automatic.

God has worked in the church in a systematic orderly way and He's given leaders with certain distinct gifts to complete His plan and purpose for the body.

The first on the list is "Apostles." There were 12 apostles in the sense the word is being used here.

If you count both Matthias and Paul ultimately there were 13. This was a limited and very unique group of men.

Sometimes you'll here people described as apostles today. The biblical apostles had to meet certain qualifications.

Acts 1:22 they had to see Christ after His resurrection, II Corinthians 12:12 they could do signs and wonders, and Ephesians 2:20 they were foundational to the church.

The second grouping in Ephesians 4 is prophets. Prophets were spokesmen for God. Their words could be prefaced with "Thus says the Lord." They spoke direct revelation from God Himself.

Again, you here that title “prophet” applied to people today, but in the Bible prophets could always foretell the future. In fact in Deuteronomy 18 God gave the acid test for prophets. He said His prophets could always accurately and specifically foretell the future.

That wasn’t all that a prophet did, but the identifying mark of God’s prophets was to be able to foretell. God used New Testament prophets as His mouthpiece to the church before the New Testament was penned down.

Both Apostles and prophets were temporary. In Ephesians 2:20 the Bible is very careful to call apostles and prophets the foundation of the church. Once a foundation is laid you build on it. You don’t keep laying down foundation on top of foundation.

Even though today no one can lay claim to being an apostle or a prophet both gifts are essential to what we believe and practice today.

In Acts 2:42 we read about early believers in Jerusalem continuing steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine. They learned the Bible directly from the source. They had the apostles to teach them.

But today, even though we don’t have the apostles with us we have their writings.

Sometimes you hear about “Apostolic Secession” meaning that the authority is passed down from one individual to another. What we have is the authority passed down to us through their writings.

The words of Peter, John and Paul are just as authoritative and practical for us today as they were 2000 years ago.

Everything we know and believe spiritually is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

The third group of gifted men that are mentioned here in Ephesians 4 is evangelists. In contrast to apostles and prophets, evangelists are not said to be foundational.

As the Scriptures were written down and the church developed, the need for

apostles and prophets faded out. But when it comes to evangelists the need for their ministry continues to exist today just like it did in the first century.

The word “evangelist” is only used 3 times in our Bibles. It literally means a “bringer of good news.” The word “Gospel” comes from the same Greek root as the word evangelist and evangelize.

Actually, there’s only one individual in the Bible that is definitely said to be an evangelist. Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist but only Philip is actually called an evangelist.

In Acts chapter 8 Luke describes what Philip did. In every case Philip preached Jesus Christ to people.

Using Philip as our guide I would say that a New Testament evangelist is someone supernaturally enabled by God to share the good news of Jesus Christ and bring people to faith.

That’s a far cry from most of what we know as televangelism today. Most people we call televangelists don’t do much evangelism.

The Trinity Foundation, who’s been monitoring televangelists since 1973 estimates that there are about 2,500 on radio and TV. They found that these guys spend lots of time asking for money, but most spend no time at on on making the good news of Jesus Christ clear to people.

A true evangelist, or a person with the gift of evangelism, is someone specifically enabled by God to share the message of Christ.

Last on the list is the pastor-teacher. Almost every English translation says “pastors and teachers.” The only one I could find that hyphenated the word is the Message.

While I wouldn’t recommend the Message for serious study, I think they got this one right. Here’s why I say that:

You’ll notice that in verse 11, He Himself gave *some* to be apostles, *some* prophets, *some* evangelists, and *some* pastors and teachers.

It doesn't say *some* pastors and *some* teachers. That's because the Greek text uses a particular word for "and" coupled with the definite article. Those two together is where the translators get "and some."

The word "pastors" is prefaced that way, but not the word "teacher."

In other words, there's a purposeful distinction between the other groups and this last one.

I would go with the way the Message handles it and hyphenate pastor-teachers.

The word for "pastor" is the Greek term *poimen*. It's used 18 times in the New Testament and it's only translated "pastor" here. All the other times it's translated as "shepherd" because that's what the word means.

Isn't interesting that as important as we've made that word "pastor" it's only used one time in the entire New Testament. *Poimen* means "one who shepherds." So these are shepherding-teachers.

A shepherd of God's flock needs to warn, lead, guide, and feed the flock. All of those aspects of a shepherd's work come through the same basic medium, teaching the Bible.

And while every Christian with the gift of teaching is not a pastor, every pastor must have the ability to teach.

Over and over again the Bible stresses the centrality of getting truth out into people's hearts and minds.

So, the pastor -teacher might be involved in a lot of other areas, but his primary responsibility is not to be the counselor, visitor, treasurer, construction manager, or whatever.

It's to labor in the Word and in doctrine.

Turn to Acts 20 page 988

In Acts 20 the Apostle Paul is giving a parting challenge to the elders of the church at Ephesus. This is several years before he was to write the letter to the Ephesians we're studying..

Read vs 17

Read vs 28 They have a flock. That flock is comprised of believers. Their main job is to feed that flock.

Why? **Read vs 29-30**

False teachers will come from the outside but some will even rise up within their own ranks to confuse people.

Read 31-32

People ask, "Why is there so many flavors of Christianity?" Here's part of the reason, because there are false teachers.

How do we keep on the right path and know truth? We have to know the Word of God's grace.

The job of the pastor-teacher is to make sure that truth is taught.

In reality all 4 of the gifts in Ephesians 4:11 relate in some way to the ministry of teaching. The Apostles and prophets gave us the foundation of truth, evangelists teach it in an understandable way to those who haven't yet believed, and pastor-teachers labor in the Word and in doctrine.

Now go back with me to Ephesians 4 and we'll see why God gave those gifted men to the church.

Harold Camping is the president of Family Radio with more than 150 stations in the United States. Unfortunately Mr. Camping keeps going off into strange doctrines.

In the early 90's he predicted that Jesus would return in 1994. Now he says the church age is over and now he tells his listeners why they should leave their churches, abandon the oversight of elders, stop using the ordinances (baptism and

the Lord's Supper), and gather around their radios for "fellowship" in the "post-church age."

When we were in Nicaragua, Horacio and Sharon met a follower of Harold Camping there.

That's just one example of the bizarre teachings that are floating around.

The church is God's design and He isn't finished working through His church until He takes it out in the rapture.

The church is necessary.

And even though all believers have the Holy Spirit as their teacher He still gave pastor teachers. There's a reason why it's necessary. And here it is in Verse 12

I. God Has Given Gifted Men To The Church to Equip Believers

II. Believers Are To Serve One Another In the Body

Read verse 12a *for the equipping of the saints*

The word translated "equipping" means "to complete" or "to outfit." It's the word that's used in Hebrews 10:5 where Jesus says, *a body You have prepared for Me.*

God the Father equipped the Son of God with a body so He could carry out His ministry here on earth.

That's the meaning here. God gave gifted men to outfit believers with what they need.

The NIV translates this *to prepare God's people...*

But then, what's He preparing them for?

The rest of verse 12 says, **Read verse 12c** *for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

A lot of churches interpret verse 12 as the threefold work of the Pastor. You hire him to equip believers, to do the work of the ministry (since we call him "the Minister," and to build up the body.

Some of that confusion arose from the misplacing of one comma in the KJV. In the KJV there's a comma after the word "saints."

That's been called "the fatal comma" because it's done more to deaden Christianity and limit the church than almost anything else.

What the Bible really says is God gave gifted men to equip God's people so that they might do the work of the ministry and edify the church.

The word "ministry" isn't being used to describe the job of the Pastor, it's describing the job of the congregation. In other words, everyone in the congregation is a "minister."

The New Testament never pictures "ministry" as something that's done by some elite group called the clergy. It's the privilege of all the people of God.

So the pastor-teacher equips the congregation with the tools and the knowledge to enable them to serve each other.

Here's the result, **Read verse 13**

There's 3 objectives.

First the whole church is to move toward a oneness in faith and understanding. The more we know and trust the Son of God the more we grow in unity.

So here at Faith Community Church the Bible is taught so that we can share our faith and knowledge with each other and grow in our ability to apply the bible.

The second objective is "a perfect man." The word translated "perfect" means "mature" or "complete." The body is to become mature with each individual believer that makes up the body becoming mature in the faith.

Then the 3rd objective, *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* or as The Message puts it *fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ*.

We know we've reached the goal when the congregation as a whole is like Jesus in

their attitudes and their actions. Obviously we've got a long way to go but that's God's ultimate purpose for us.

Now, I know that there's a lot of ways that people evaluate a successful church. The size, the programs, the building, the staff, the budget. But God's standard of measurement doesn't include any of those things. His standard is Christ!

This is what we're to move towards. This is what we're to do with the equipping teaching that we get.

Our concern ought to be the spiritual development of FCC. We're to prompt, we're to prod, we're to lead, we're to encourage, we're to exhort each other to be like Jesus Christ.

When we get to that goal we can say we've made it. When we get there we can rest, but not before.

I. God Has Given Gifted Men To The Church to Equip Believers

II. Believers Are To Serve One Another In the Body

III. The Result Of The Ministry Is Maturity

Read vs 14

The Bible tells us that we're all born into this world spiritually dead. Ever since Adam sinned in the garden human beings come into the world separated from their Creator.

That's why we need new life. Jesus said, *unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Being born again comes when we realize that we're separated from God and we receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

That same chapter of the Bible that records Jesus words about being born again say this: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not

believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Believing in Christ is how we're born again. Once that happens we need to grow. Spiritually we start out as a child and we need to grow to maturity.

It's a tragedy when a child is not able to mentally develop. But it's an even greater tragedy when a Christian doesn't mature. When things are working properly in a church we do grow and mature.

There's 2 tendencies in kids. One is instability and the other is gullibility.

So God says, a maturing church won't be all over the place doctrinally. Unity only happens if everyone's on the same track.

A maturing church won't fall for every new thing that comes along. The word translated "trickery" in verse 14 is *kubeia*. It's where we get the English word cube. Originally it meant dice playing.

Unfortunately, there's some people out there playing with loaded dice. They're plotting to deceive.

An immature believer is like a child, easily tricked and liable to be misled.

Lenski gives this explanation in his commentary on Ephesians. He writes, "Paul's effective characterization of error and of errorists is surely drawn from his own experience. He had been in vessels that were drifting helplessly in waves and wind; he had seen soldiers and sailors use loaded dice to fleece some innocent greenhorn. They had their expert system which was all fair and honest to the inexperienced eye but deadly in its cunning and trickiness. Paul thus draws his composite picture and combines the significant terms compactly. Error always operates with tricky expertness. It uses Bible passages (apparently according to their real meaning) and reasonings (apparently sound) and thus easily fools the "infants" in Christian faith and knowledge, who have not yet grown up to Christian manhood and the age-measure of the fullness of Christ."

It's amazing how many times the Bible presents false teachers as being willingly deceptive.

Benny Hinn is probably the best known faith healer of our day. He's on television and radio. He holds miracle crusades all over the world. In 2007 he'll be in the Dominican Republic, Cyprus, South Africa, Singapore, Taiwan, London, The Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Peru.

Hinn claims that God heals through him because he's anointed with a special power. You can watch his telecasts, and read the reviews by those who attend.

Philip Powel writes, "After personally attending one of Hinn's crusades, however, I can say from experience that the likelihood of being hurt during such an occasion is vastly greater than that of being helped or healed. I observed with great anguish scores of men, women, and children who could not even get near to the stage to be healed by Hinn. The scenario can best be described as a vulgar display of 'survival of the fittest,' with people stampeding madly to get on stage so they can experience falling at Hinn's feet."

"Tragically, those who attended the meeting in wheelchairs ended up leaving in the same physical condition. Some departed in tears. Others told me they left feeling that God neither cared for them nor had the time to consider their needs."

"Make no mistake: I personally believe in God's healing power. But if God is in fact healing through Hinn, the evidence is conspicuous by its absence. Where, for example, are those whose missing eyes or legs have been restored? If God has indeed used Hinn to heal multiple hundreds as Hinn boasts, then why hasn't even one quadriplegic stepped forward to show the world that Hinn represents the real power of the Holy Spirit?"

Benny Hinn won't divulge his salary but did admit to DateLine that it might be as much as \$1,000,000 a year.

I hate to say it but Benny Hinn knows full well that his healing claims are bogus. Somehow we're failing to proclaim God's truth when millions give their hard earned cash to men like Hinn.

Well if verse 14 gives the negative, verse 15 & 16 give the positive.

Read verse 15-16

A maturing church not only teaches truth it does it in love, becoming more like Jesus every day.

Tomorrow will be a new year. I don't know what kind of goals you have set for 2007 but I know what they should be for this church; unity of faith and knowledge, maturity, and Christlikeness.

And each of us has a part in developing those characteristics in ourselves and in one another.

The strength of FCC, the success of FCC, depends on one thing. it's not the building, it's not the programs, it's not the budget.

The success of this church depends on its ministers.

Are you part of this congregation because you want to serve others? Do you have a passion to see those around you grow, and strengthen, and develop in their faith? That's God's purpose. That's God's goal.

...growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.