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### What About the “Pastors” of Ephesians 4:11?

By David DeWitt

The only time the word  $\rho\omicron\iota\mu\eta/\nu$  (*poimen*) is translated *pastors* is in the English New Testament versions Ephesians 4:11. *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.*

#### There are three possibilities for the duration of these five gifts:

1. They were all just for the beginning of the church during the first century.
2. Only apostles and prophets were for the beginning of the church.
3. All of these still exist today.

But whatever view you hold about how long they occurred, these are people who are gifts to the church, given to the whole church by Jesus at the time of His ascension. These are not the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, given by the Holy Spirit, at the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

**Nothing** in the book of Ephesians refers to what we call “local churches.” Absolutely nothing. Nothing in Ephesians is about the subdivision of the believers in a city, such as into house church assemblies. There is nothing about the regulation of house churches, the nature of their assemblies or appointing their leadership. Ephesians is about there being *...one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all* (Ephesians 4:4-6). There is nothing local about it.

For example, in Ephesians 4:11:

- Were the *apostles* (like, say, Peter, Paul, and John) meant to be one for each local house church or the universal body of all believers? **Answer: obviously, for all believers.**
- Were the *prophets* (which included at least some of the apostles plus Matthew, Mark, Luke, the Lord’s half-brothers James, and Jude) meant to be one for each local church or were they prophets for the universal body of all believers? **Answer: obviously, for all believers.**
- Were the *evangelists* (such as James, Apollos, and Philip) meant to be one evangelist for each local church or those who evangelized throughout the universal body of all believers? **Answer: obviously, for all believers.** If these gifts are for the whole church age, we can see evangelists like D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and Luis Palau. We do not observe one for each local church.
- Were the *teachers* (like Timothy, Titus, Priscilla, and Aquila) meant to be one for each local church or the universal body of all believers? **Answer: obviously, for all believers.** We can hear or read the work of teachers like C. S. Lewis, J. Vernon McGee, and Charles Ryrie. Not one teacher for each local church.

So why would we conclude that *pastors* are the only gift in Ephesians 4:11 designated to be one of them for each local church, when there is absolutely nothing else about a local church in the whole book or this passage? **Answer: because we are reading our tradition back into Scripture, desperately looking for something to justify what we are doing.**

Pastors [ $\rho\omicron\iota\mu\eta/\nu$  (*poimen*)] are shepherds. They take care of wayward sheep, keeping them out of trouble, and leading them out of chaos and into order. We can see the work of pastors like the New Testament Barnabas, and later the friars like Francis of Assisi, and still later, William Booth, Hudson Taylor, Brother Andrew, and Mother Teresa. None of this has anything to do with being *first among them* or regularly speaking to a group on Sunday morning.

But, some ask, weren’t there some prophets and teachers in individual house churches? Yes, there were. These were people who received those gifts from the Holy Spirit (listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12) at the beginning of the church in Acts 2. But that’s not these men in Ephesians 4. These men were given by Christ at His ascension, and were for the global body of all believers. And neither list of the gifts from the Holy Spirit (listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12) includes pastors. Only these men in Ephesians 4.