

“And He Gave Some . . .”

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Read Ephesians 4:7-16

I trust I am not so naïve as to believe there is only one perspective on any given idea. I am offering you a perspective that I currently embrace. The conclusions I am presenting are three-fold. First, the idea of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher described in verse 11 is gifting, but is also referring to positions within the church local. I also believe gifting is almost completely gender neutral. I do believe there were female apostles and prophets and teachers. There were many women who exhibited leadership in both the Old and New Testaments:

Exodus 15:20 -- **Miriam**, the sister of Aaron was a **prophetess and one of the triad of leaders** of Israel during the Exodus from Egypt.

Judges 4; 5 -- **Deborah**, a **prophet-judge**, headed the army of ancient Israel.

2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22 -- **Huldah**, a **prophet**, verified the authenticity of the "Book of the Law of the Lord given through Moses."

Acts 21:8 -- Philip the evangelist had **four unmarried daughters who were prophets**.

Romans 16:1 -- Paul refers to **Phoebe** as a minister (**diakonos**) of the church at Cenchrea. Some translations say **deaconess**; others try to obscure her position by **mistranslating it as "servant" or "helper"**.

Romans 16:3 -- Paul refers to **Priscilla** as another of his "**fellow workers** in Christ Jesus" (NIV) Other translations refer to her as a "**co-worker**". But other translations attempt to downgrade her status by calling her a "helper". The original Greek word is "synergoi", which literally means "**fellow worker**" or "**colleague**." (7)

Romans 16:7 -- Paul refers to a **male apostle, Andronicus**, and a **female apostle, Junia**, as "outstanding among the apostles" (NIV) The Amplified Bible translates this passage as "They are men held in high esteem among the apostles" The Revised Standard Version shows it as "they are men of note among the apostles". The **reference to them both being men does not appear in the original Greek text**. The word "**men**" was **simply inserted by the translators, apparently because the translators' minds recoiled from the concept of a female apostle**. Many translations, including the Amplified Bible, Rheims New Testament, New American Standard Bible, and the **New International Version simply picked the letter "s" out of thin air, and converted the original "Junia" (a woman) into "Junias" (a man)**.

However, I do not believe the office of elder is ever ascribed to females. Thus I would maintain that within the New Testament Canon there is a progression of development whereby certain gifting and offices do become gender qualified. Second, I believe the gift of

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apostle, prophet, etc. are within the context of local churches. There was a transition from the early church in its infant state, centered in Jerusalem and the Mediterranean region, to what it would become as a global entity. The early church manual called **The Didache** addresses this transition of apostles and prophets who existed outside the local assembly. The early second and third century church had to address the “problem” of independent individuals who presented themselves as apostles and prophets. There is a church universal but it does not have any structure apart from Christ as the head and each member constituting the body. It is the church local that receives from the Lord and maintains the gifting and positions of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Finally, I believe those who enjoy the gifting can and should make up the elders of these geographically defined assemblies. I recognize there is much discussion as to whether or not certain gifting/positions is still active in today’s church. From Ephesians 4:7-16, I would have to conclude their existence is still necessary. I wonder what would happen if we began to recognize such gifting within the church local and then began to celebrate such gifting as it advanced the mission of Christ in and through His church.

What is of interest is that in Ephesians 4 the intent of the gifting and positions is for the maintaining and guarding of biblical unity through the equipping of the body resulting in its stability and growth. I would be pushed to conclude that in the absence of this desire for and submission to the biblical structure there is the real potential for significant harm to the individuals who choose not to function within geographically defined assemblies with a biblical structure and mission.

This is what I believe the text to teach: I have seen the reality of this picture played out in real time when meeting with various individuals who believe they are bigger than any one local church and who are unwilling to place themselves under the protection and direction of a biblical structure of elders and deacons. They simply refuse to plant themselves into any one local church. As a result of this mindset, they are “tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.” Although such language appears harsh and overly critical, I am still bound by the text of Ephesians 4:7-16. There are those individuals who have a larger voice than is contained in any one local church, but it is never in the absence of the local church and the biblical structure.

As I noted earlier, these are simply my thoughts on Ephesians 4:7-16, and I believe there are others who would disagree with me, but I offer these thoughts with the hope that God would continue to knit our hearts around the person and work of Christ and that because of Him we would continue to see, guard and enjoy unity in the church local.

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship**; a **Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.