

APEST Model Introduction

APEST stands for “Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, Teacher” and it comes from the list of gifts Jesus gave to the Church in Ephesians 4:11-12

*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*

Many groups have called this the fivefold ministry. Often times this model has been abused by proud and domineering leaders who have claimed apostolic or prophetic authority and have taught this as a hierarchy.

Not a hierarchy, but a team

While we would agree that the Apostles (note the capital A, the 12) had a unique authority as people explicitly sent by Christ to carry on his mission, the New Testament letters make it very clear that authority in the local church rests with the elders (and deacons.) But in Ephesians 4 we find these five gifts given to the church to equip the saints, build the body, and to promote unity and maturity. *(For definitions of these terms see the next page.)*

The missional church movement has offered a healthy approach to this passage: To see these as team members, **equals with different roles**. And these are not the roles of a select few, but of everyone in the body. But as they grow in maturity, they move toward the centre into leadership. Ideally, the leadership includes all five gifts. At the very centre is Jesus, who is the ultimate role model of each of these.

Not a ministry, but a mission

The advantage to this teaching is that it moves people into mission and not simply service. A shepherd is needed because people in the church need to be cared for and protected. An apostle is needed to extend the work of the kingdom to new contexts. These people are not simply doing a job, they are carrying out the mission of the church in all five ways!

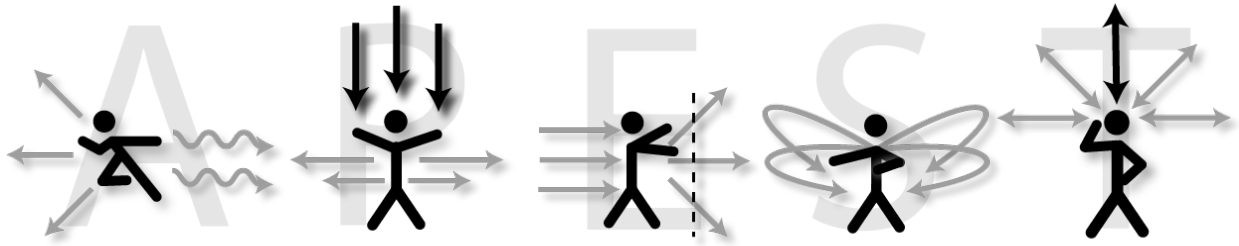
- Apostolic - The Church is always extending to new contexts
- Prophetic - The Church is always the voice crying out into the wilderness
- Evangelistic - The Church is always calling people back to God
- Shepherd - The Church is always caring for the weak
- Teaching - The Church is always making known the truth of God

In order to accomplish these parts of the mission, we need people specifically gifted and burdened with these calls.

Other passages on spiritual gifts (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and 1 Peter 4) teach similarly, but the focus is on the specific actions. Ephesians 4 seems to focus more on the roles, the people, the ministry, the call.

As we have been teaching this in The Crew, we are encouraging people to not only self-diagnose, but to affirm each other in how we see God working through each other. We are also learning how to grow in these gifts.

APEST Model of Spiritual Gifts



APOSTLES extend the gospel. As the “sent ones,” they ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. They are always thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, networking trans-locally. Yes, if you focus solely on initiating new ideas and rapid expansion, you can leave people and organizations wounded. The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure people are cared for rather than simply used.

PROPHETS know God's will. They are particularly attuned to God and his truth for today. They bring correction and challenge the dominant assumptions we inherit from the culture. They insist that the community obey what God has commanded. They question the status quo. Without the other types of leaders in place, prophets can become belligerent activists or, paradoxically, disengage from the imperfection of reality and become other-worldly.

EVANGELISTS recruit. These infectious communicators of the gospel message recruit others to the cause. They call for a personal response to God's redemption in Christ, and also draw believers to engage the wider mission, growing the church. Evangelists can be so focused on reaching those outside the church that maturing and strengthening those inside is neglected.

SHEPHERDS nurture and protect. Caregivers of the community, they focus on the protection and spiritual maturity of God's flock, cultivating a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships, making and developing disciples. Shepherds can value stability to the detriment of the mission. They may also foster an unhealthy dependence between the church and themselves.

TEACHERS understand and explain. Communicators of God's truth and wisdom, they help others remain biblically grounded to better discern God's will, guiding others toward wisdom, helping the community remain faithful to Christ's word, and constructing a transferable doctrine. Without the input of the other functions, teachers can fall into dogmatism or dry intellectualism. They may fail to see the personal or missional aspects of the church's ministry.

