

GIFTS PASSION STORY

 SALEM ALLIANCE CHURCH

NOTE TO READER

Lectio Divina/Devotional Reading

There have been various approaches to reading Scripture throughout Church history.

A common contemporary approach is through exegetical study—reading Scripture by examining the text, asking questions, and exploring the historical background. The emphasis is on discovering eternal truths and precepts for living.¹

Another approach that has characterized the Church's reading of Scripture for centuries is Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina literally means “divine reading.” Another way to say this is “devotional reading.”² (This is the term that we will use throughout this study guide.)

Devotional reading is not an exercise in mentally critiquing or exegeting the text but is the practice of hearing and responding to the loving voice of God through the words of Scripture. It’s an invitation to deeper communion with God. It provides opportunity for greater experiential knowing of His love for us, like Paul describes in **Ephesians 3:19**: “to know this love that surpasses knowledge.”³

Both approaches are important. We want to be careful not to emphasize one over the other as this can lead to “extremes of cold intellectualism or mindless enthusiasm.”⁴ Therefore, throughout this study guide, we’ve tried to integrate a balance of both. Since devotional reading may be new to some of you, we’ve put together some prompts below to help guide you through the process of devotional reading. You can refer back to these throughout the study.

DEVOTIONAL READING PROMPTS

Devotional reading has been traditionally made up of 5 movements:⁵

- Prepare (*Silencio*)
- Read (*Lectio*)
- Reflect (*Meditatio*)
- Respond (*Oratio*)
- Rest (*Contemplatio*)

¹ Benner, David G. *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer*. IVP, an Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2021. 48

² Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. IVP Books, 2015. 188

³ Ibid. 188

⁴ Boa, Kenneth. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical, Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*. Zondervan Academic, 2020. 175

⁵ Descriptions are taken from: Hanns, Tyler. “New, Unified Humanity ‘in Christ.’” *Bridgetown Church*, Bridgetown Church, 10 Sept. 2022, <https://bridgetown.church/guides/new-unified-humanity-in-christ>.

1. **Prepare:** Turn your phone off and leave it in another room. Situate yourself comfortably in a quiet, solitary place. Calm your body and quiet your mind before God as you work to prepare your heart to receive what God has spoken through the text, and to respond accordingly. Finally, invite Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling as you read.
2. **Read:** Read the passage slowly and carefully. Take your time. Read the passage out loud if that helps you slow down. As you move through the text, pay close attention to what words and ideas draw your attention in unique ways. When your focus is drawn to a particular word or thought, pause momentarily to reflect on them.
3. **Reflect:** Upon completing the passage, return to the beginning and read again. On your second journey through the text, allow the text to connect with you personally. Which words or phrases cause a particular resonance in your heart, your season of life, and your person in this moment. Ask, “What do I need to know, or be, or do in light of the text? What does this mean for my life today?”
4. **Respond:** Talk to God about your experience. If you’re confused, say that. Moved? Express gratitude to God. Upset? Tell Him about it. Compelled to worship? Worship. If the text has brought something else to mind, talk to God about that.
5. **Rest:** Pause to sit in God’s presence before moving on from the moment. Allow space for the words and reflections from this time to sink deeply into your soul.

INTRO TO GPS

Lesson 1

BIG IDEA

Paul tells us in **Ephesians 2:10** that, *“we are God’s masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”*⁶

Scripture is clear—each of us is a masterpiece that has a unique and significant role to play in seeing God’s Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven. More specifically, we believe that here at Salem Alliance, each member of our church has a unique and significant role to play in seeing Salem become a city at peace with God.

Central to understanding our unique Kingdom role is discovering and exploring our gifts, passions, and story. It’s as these three things intersect in our lives that we are empowered by Holy Spirit to live on mission: carrying the peace, power, and presence of Christ everywhere we step.

DEVOTIONAL READING

Read **Ephesians 2:1–10**.

Prepare: Relax and invite Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling.

Read: Read the passage slowly and carefully. *What words or ideas draw my attention?*

Reflect: Read the passage again. *How does this word/idea relate to my life today?*

Respond: Read the passage one final time. *What would I like to say to God in response?*

Rest: Sit and rest in God’s presence. Allow space for the words and reflections from this time to sink deeply into your soul.

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

QUESTIONS

From the very beginning of time, it's been God's heart and desire to fill the earth with His presence through people. As His image bearers, He called Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth, carrying His divine presence to the world.⁷ As the Church, we have now received a similar call to multiply and fill the earth with the presence of Jesus as we go and make disciples.⁸

Paul puts it this way in **Ephesians 1:22–23**:

“God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.”

1. Who does Paul say will “fill all things everywhere” with the presence of Jesus?
2. What do you think Paul means when he describes the Church as Christ's body?

What are some of the practical implications of the Church being the body of Christ and filling all things everywhere with His presence?

3. What other adjectives could you use to describe the fullness of Jesus' presence (e.g. peace, love, etc.)?
 - a. As you look at your list of descriptive words, how would your spheres of influence be transformed if they were saturated with the fullness of Jesus?
 - b. Where do you long to see the fullness of Jesus' presence in your spheres of influence (e.g. neighborhood, school, workplace, interest group, etc.)?

⁷ Genesis 1:27–28

⁸ Matthew 28:19–20

Later, in **Ephesians 2:8–10**, Paul explains that we are not saved by our works, but we are saved for good works.

Todd Wilson rephrases it like this: “[We] are saved for far more than a destination. [We] are saved to play a part in the grand restoration of God’s kingdom on earth”⁹

4. What is your reaction to the idea that we are saved FOR good works and that YOU have a part to play “in the grand restoration of God’s kingdom on earth?”

5. Why do you think God desires to use us, and partner with us, in these good works?

6. Throughout this passage, Paul uses the plural pronoun “we.” What is significant about Paul’s use of this pronoun?

7. Why might discovering and developing your unique gifts, passions, and story be an important part of you helping Salem become a city at peace with God?

⁹ Wegner, Rob, and Brian Phipps. *Find Your Place: Locating Your Calling through Your Gifts, Passions, and Story*. Zondervan, 2019. 11

NEXT STEPS

1. Memorize **Ephesians 2:10**:

“We are God’s masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

Ephesians 2:10 is the key verse for the GPS sermon series and study guide. We encourage you to memorize and meditate on this verse each week. You may find it helpful to write it out and put it in multiple places where you spend time, or add it as a screensaver to your phone or computer.

2. Take the GPS assessment

In order to get the most out of this study guide and your Life Group discussions, you will need to take the GPS assessment.

The GPS assessment is a free online assessment that explores your gifts, passions, and story and how they intersect to empower you to live on mission: to carry the peace, power, and presence of Christ everywhere you step.

Scan the QR code below to be directed towards taking the assessment. Make sure to watch the instructional video before you start the assessment:



If you would prefer to type the link directly into your web browser, here it is:
shorturl.at/oxzE5

Once you have completed the assessment, print out your results to help you answer future questions in the study guide as well as aid you in your group discussions.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND SERMON NOTES:

GIFTS

Lesson 2

BIG IDEA

We all have skills and abilities whether they are related to the work we do, the hobbies we pursue, or the opportunities that arise in our lives as we engage with others.

As members of the Body of Christ, we also have Spirit-empowered gifts. These Spirit-empowered gifts are given to us by God so that we can carry out our role in the life of the Church and beyond. These gifts are given to us by the grace of God so that we are able to help each other. It's incredibly freeing when we realize that God organizes and orchestrates who gets what gift. We don't earn the gifts. We receive them from God. Then we live them out as part of the Body of Christ.

In this lesson we'll explore more about gifts, process the results of our online assessments, and learn about the ways we can confidently serve those around us.

DEVOTIONAL READING

Read **1 Corinthians 12:1–7**.

Prepare: Relax and invite Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling.

Read: Read the passage slowly and carefully. *What words or ideas draw my attention?*

Reflect: Read the passage again. *How does this word/idea relate to my life today?*

Respond: Read the passage one final time. *What would I like to say to God in response?*

Rest: Sit and rest in God's presence. Allow space for the words and reflections from this time to sink deeply into your soul.

QUESTIONS

As you move from contemplating how Holy Spirit spoke to you, open your Bible to **1 Samuel 16**. Ask God to continue speaking to you as you read through part of David's story.

1. According to **1 Samuel 16:1–13**, who was the only One who knew that David was to be Israel's next king?
 - a. How did Samuel find out who would be the next king in Israel?
 - b. In **verse 7**, what do you learn about God's view of a person in contrast to how people view each other?
 - c. What surprises/encourages/confuses/etc. you about these 13 verses of David's story, and why?

2. In **1 Samuel 16:14–23** David expressed a Spirit-empowered gift. What was it?
 - a. In David's hands, the harp took on supernatural power. Describe the result of David's "ministry" to Saul?
 - b. What was required of David in order to be used by the Spirit in this way?

3. **1 Samuel 17:1–51** tells an extraordinary story about David that sheds light on many ordinary-seeming details from his life. From this passage, how had David's ordinary abilities and skills prepared him for this extraordinary encounter with Goliath?

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

4. On your own, process through the information you received through the online assessment. Be prepared to talk more about it in your Life Group.
 - a. What is your reaction to your spiritual gift results? (e.g. Affirmation, Surprise, Confusion, Resistance, etc.)

 - b. Share with your Life Group some of the results from the Gifts section of your assessment.¹⁰

5. In **1 Samuel 16:18–23** we learn that David's Spirit-empowered gift was playing the harp.
 - a. How have you expressed your Spirit-empowered gifts in the past/present or how might you express them in the future?

 - b. Take time in your Life Group to affirm the ways you've seen fellow group members express their Spirit-empowered gifts or ways that you think they might express them in the future.

6. In **1 Samuel 17:32–51**, David's ordinary skills and abilities came through his training and experience as a shepherd.
 - a. Share with your Life Group some of your everyday skills and abilities.

 - b. What might be the benefits of using your skills/abilities in partnership with your spiritual gifts?

¹⁰ See page 25 for descriptions of the spiritual gifts.

NEXT STEPS

1. Pray.

Take time to pray and thank God for who He has created you and your fellow Life Group members to be. Ask Him to continue to clarify what you're learning about your Spirit-empowered gifts and your ordinary abilities.

2. Consider sitting down with a trusted friend who knows you well to process your online spiritual gifts assessment.
3. Further study (Optional).

Read Ephesians 4 and Romans 12.

Note what you learn. How might you apply it to your life as you more fully explore your Spirit-empowered gifts?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND SERMON NOTES:

PASSIONS

Lesson 3

BIG IDEA

“What comes to mind when you think of passion? Most people think of strong feelings, of having an experience in which they feel alive, or when things click and they have a sense that this is what they were made to do.”¹¹

Discovering our God-assigned passions is an essential part of living out our unique Kingdom role. As we seek to bring more of God’s Kingdom to earth through our gifts, passions, and story, we will find ourselves in a war—a spiritual war.¹²

The powers of darkness are real and eager to destroy us.¹³ Our passions are what help direct our attention and efforts in the battle, as well as motivate and empower us to keep fighting the good fight.¹⁴

DEVOTIONAL READING

Read **Ephesians 4:1–13**.

Prepare: Relax and invite Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling.

Read: Read the passage slowly and carefully. *What words or ideas draw my attention?*

Reflect: Read the passage again. *How does this word/idea relate to my life today?*

Respond: Read the passage one final time. *What would I like to say to God in response?*

Rest: Sit and rest in God’s presence. Allow space for the words and reflections from this time to sink deeply into your soul.

¹¹ Wegner, Rob, and Brian Phipps. *Find Your Place: Locating Your Calling through Your Gifts, Passions, and Story*. Zondervan, 2019. 95

¹² **Ephesians 6:10–12**

¹³ **1 Peter 5:18**

¹⁴ **1 Timothy 6:12**

QUESTIONS

Read **Ephesians 6:10–12**. (Paul’s instructions to the Church in Ephesus on spiritual warfare.)

1. How does Paul describe our enemy?
2. What is your reaction to the reality that we are in a spiritual battle?
3. Where do you see the powers of darkness at work in our world?

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, He provides us with the perfect example of what it looks like to engage in the spiritual battle.

4. As you read through the passages below, underline ways in which Jesus went about combating the powers of darkness.

a. **Luke 4:18–19**

¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
¹⁹ and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.”*

b. **Matthew 8:16**

That evening many demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he healed all the sick.

c. **Matthew 6:9–13**

Pray like this:

⁹ *Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.
¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today the food we need,
¹² and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.*

d. **Matthew 23:23–24**

²³ *“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.*
²⁴ *Blind guides! You strain your water so you won’t accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!*

e. **Matthew 21:12–13**

¹² *Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves.* ¹³ *He said to them, “The Scriptures declare, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer,’ but you have turned it into a den of thieves!”*

f. **John 19:28–30**

²⁸ *Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, “I am thirsty.”* ²⁹ *A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips.* ³⁰ *When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

i. From these passages, what stands out to you about Jesus’ approach to combating the powers of darkness?

ii. Identify what causes and people Jesus was passionate about.

iii. How does Jesus’ example inspire you to engage in the spiritual battle?

Read **Ephesians 4:7–13**. (Paul’s instructions to the Church in Ephesus on influencing styles.)

5. What are the five different roles/influencing styles¹⁵ that Paul lists?¹⁶
6. What does Paul say are the purpose of these influencing styles?
7. What biblical examples can you think of that express these different influencing styles?

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

8. As you reflect on your passions, why do you think you are drawn to these specific people and causes? Is there an experience you had that helped develop these passions in you?
9. What is your reaction to your influencing style results? (e.g. Affirmation, Surprise, Confusion, Resistance, etc.)

¹⁵ For descriptions of each influencing style, see page 27.

¹⁶ “These five styles are not just leadership roles that reflect the calling of a few individuals; they are lifelong influencing styles given to every follower of Jesus. Only Jesus fully lived out all five to their full potential. And all of us can grow in all five of them. But each of us has one style that is our primary among five.” Wegner, Rob, and Brian Phipps. *Find Your Place: Locating Your Calling through Your Gifts, Passions, and Story*. Zondervan, 2019. 115

10. One Apostle/Prophet/Evangelist/Shepherd/Teacher doesn't look identical to another due to all the other variables that make you, you! How does being a _____ look in your life?¹⁷

11. Have you ever used your influencing style to make a difference in one of your passion areas? If so, what did that look like?

NEXT STEPS

1. If you don't already have an area where you can engage your passions, consider talking with trusted others about different options and reach out to take the first step of getting involved.
2. Do some more research and learning about your influencing style and how it has and can impact every aspect of your life.

¹⁷ "We all have a primary and a secondary influencing style. Your primary (or dominant) influencing style will be fairly obvious, because it reflects your motivation—what drives your passion. Your secondary style will often be reflected in your means—how you seek to accomplish what you are motivated to do, the way in which you express your motivation." Wegner, Rob, and Brian Phipps. *Find Your Place: Locating Your Calling through Your Gifts, Passions, and Story*. Zondervan, 2019. 122

PRAYER REQUESTS AND SERMON NOTES:

STORY

Lesson 4

BIG IDEA

All of us have a story. Yet, how many of us understand what our story means in the context of God's larger story? Do we know how God might desire to use our story for His Kingdom purposes?

It is so easy to go about our lives and not reflect on our stories. We can also live according to a false narrative about ourselves. Therefore, we need to develop eyes and ears that are attuned to the details of our lives. It's as we reflect on our stories, with the guidance of Holy Spirit, that He illuminates the truth about who we are and who we are becoming. He reveals how the events of our lives are preparing us for our unique role and contribution to God's Kingdom.

DEVOTIONAL READING

Read **Romans 8:28–39**.

Prepare: Relax and invite Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling.

Read: Read the passage slowly and carefully. *What words or ideas draw my attention?*

Reflect: Read the passage again. *How does this word/idea relate to my life today?*

Respond: Read the passage one final time. *What would I like to say to God in response?*

Rest: Sit and rest in God's presence. Allow space for the words and reflections from this time to sink deeply into your soul.

QUESTIONS

In this lesson we are going to spend time looking at the life of Peter and how the events of his story, with the guidance of Jesus, prepare him for the unique Kingdom role that God planned for him.

As we look at the life of Peter, we are going to pay particular attention to moments of blessing and brokenness, moments of success and suffering, and moments of progress and pain.¹⁸ These are often moments where meaning and direction emerge in our stories, and it's no different with Peter.

Read **Luke 5:1–11**. (Peter's first encounter with Jesus.)

1. Where do you see moments of blessing in Peter's first encounter with Jesus?
2. Where do you see moments of brokenness?
3. How does Jesus connect Peter's story of being a fisherman with his new calling?

Read **Matthew 16:13–20**. (Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ.)

4. What was Peter's spiritual breakthrough?
5. Where did his success come from?
6. What words of blessing and promise were spoken over Peter?

¹⁸ Wegner, Rob, and Brian Phipps. *Find Your Place: Locating Your Calling through Your Gifts, Passions, and Story*. Zondervan, 2019. 136

Read **Luke 22:54–62** (Peter’s denial of Jesus before his crucifixion) and **John 21:15–19** (Peter’s encounter with Jesus after his resurrection).

7. Where do you see Peter’s failure and pain described in these passages?

8. How does Jesus redeem Peter’s failure and pain and use it to recommission him to serve others?

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

Imagine yourself walking down a hallway and on the walls are pictures that reflect life-shaping moments in your story.

Walking slowly down the hallway and looking carefully at each picture is an important step toward understanding who God created you to be and discovering the Kingdom purpose He has for you.¹⁹

Take time now to reflect on your story, using the following questions. Don’t feel like you have to document everything. You may find it helpful to break up your story into different seasons of your life (e.g. childhood, adulthood, senior years). Pay attention to where Holy Spirit guides you and what thoughts and memories come to mind.

9. Where have you experienced blessing in your story?
 - a. Personal:

 - b. Vocational:

 - c. Relational:

 - d. Spiritual:

¹⁹ Wegner, Rob, and Brian Phipps. *Find Your Place: Locating Your Calling through Your Gifts, Passions, and Story*. Zondervan, 2019.

10. Where have you experienced brokenness in your story?

a. Personal:

b. Vocational:

c. Relational:

d. Spiritual:

Bring these moments of your story to Jesus and ask Him to open your eyes to their significance in His larger story. Ask Holy Spirit to help you interpret the events of your life and what part they might have to play in your unique Kingdom role. Use the following questions to help with this process.

11. What are the repeated themes you notice in your story?

12. What memories spark the most emotion in you?

13. How might Jesus be calling you to bless others in ways that you have been blessed?

14. How can you reach out to others who have experienced the same kind of brokenness?
How might Jesus want to redeem your pain for His Kingdom purposes?

15. As you reflect on your story and the moments of blessing and brokenness, answer the following question:

If God offered to make one meaningful change in the world through your life, what change would you want Him to make?

NEXT STEPS

Now that you've finished the study guide, you may find that you have all the information you need to live out your unique Kingdom role. You have a good grasp on your gifts, passions and story and how they intersect to empower you to live on mission. If that's the case, we celebrate that with you and commission you to go and be the peace, power, and presence of Jesus everywhere you step!

Yet, for others, this may simply be the start of your journey. This process has stirred more questions in you than before you began. If that's the case, we invite you to join us for a follow up coaching session. We have a team of GPS coaches who would love to meet with you and help you process your assessment results in a 1-on-1 context. They will provide a listening and discerning ear and can provide helpful next steps in your discovery journey.²⁰

²⁰ When you take the online assessment you should be connected to a GPS coach. If you have questions or need connected please reach out to Salem Alliance Church.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND SERMON NOTES:

Spiritual Gifts Definitions

ADMINISTRATION

Also called the gift of organization, this is the ability to organize and manage resources for effective ministry, and coordinate many details to execute the plans of leadership. It includes the ability to recognize the gifts of others, invite them to share their gifts, and serve them in their ministry efforts.

APOSTLESHIP

The ability to start new churches or mission efforts and oversee their development.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

The ability to creatively design and/or construct items to be used for ministry.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

The divine ability to communicate God's truth through a variety of art forms.

DISCERNMENT

The ability to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, and to provide clear judgments based on God's Word. The ability to discern whether the source of a given experience is God's Spirit, self, or the enemy.

ENCOURAGEMENT

The ability to motivate God's people to apply and act on Biblical principles, including times when they are discouraged or wavering in their faith. The ability to bring out the best in others and challenge them to develop their potential.

EVANGELISM

The ability to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in a positive, sensitive, and effective way. The ability to sense and make the most of opportunities to share Jesus, and invite people to follow Him.

FAITH

The ability to trust God for what cannot be seen and to act on God's promises, regardless of what the circumstances indicate. It includes the willingness to risk failure in pursuit of a God-given vision, expecting God to handle the obstacles.

GIVING

The ability to generously and joyfully contribute material resources to strengthen and grow the church. The ability to earn and manage money so it may be given to support the ministry of others.

HOSPITALITY

The ability to make others, especially strangers, feel warmly welcomed, accepted, and comfortable in the church family. The ability to create events and environments that promote friendship.

INTERCESSION

The ability to pray for the needs of others in the church family over extended periods of time on a regular basis. The ability to persist in prayer and not be discouraged in awaiting answers.

KNOWLEDGE

The ability to discern and analyze information that is vital to individual believers or the entire church family. The ability to grasp and interpret God's revelation with sound judgment.

LEADERSHIP

The ability to clarify and communicate ministry purposes and goals in a way that attracts others to get involved and follow. The ability to motivate and organize others to work together in accomplishing a ministry goal.

MERCY

The ability to perceive when someone is suffering, and to empathize and help them. The ability to provide compassionate and cheerful support to those experiencing distress, crisis, or pain.

PROPHECY

The ability to publicly communicate God's word in an inspired way that convinces unbelievers, and both challenges and comforts believers. The ability to accurately and persuasively declare God's will.

SERVICE

The ability to recognize unmet needs in the church family, and take the initiative to provide practical assistance quickly, cheerfully, and without a need for recognition.

SHEPHERDING

The ability to care for the spiritual needs of a group of believers and equip them for ministry. The ability to nurture a group toward spiritual growth and assume responsibility for their welfare.

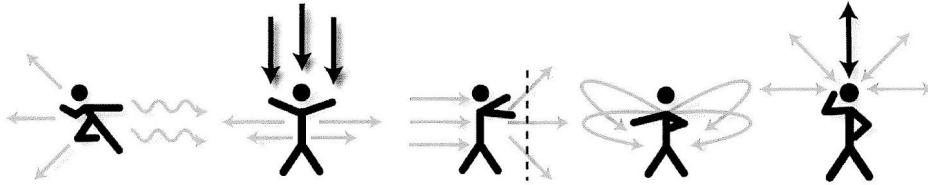
TEACHING

The ability to effectively and enthusiastically help others grow through the use of God's Word. The ability to equip and train believers for ministry.

WISDOM

The God-given ability to hear the Holy Spirit and receive insights into what to do or to say to assist specific needs of God's family.

Influencing Styles/APEST Descriptions



And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. -Ephesians 4:11-12

"Because they operate within a system, each individual APEST function enriches, counterbalances, and "corrects" the particular bias of each of the others. In fact, each function actually needs the others to be itself." -Alan Hirsch

Apostles

Key words: Visionary, pioneering, new initiatives, expansion

Description: Apostles extend the gospel. They ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. They are always pushing into new territory, thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, networking trans-locally, and coming up with new and innovative means to do kingdom work.

Biblical examples: Peter, John, Paul, Priscilla & Aquilla

Other examples: Entrepreneurs, explorers, church planters

Core question apostles ask: Are we leading the people of God to accomplish his purpose?

Mature apostles enjoy: Dreaming, new & challenging tasks, starting new things, expanding the Kingdom

Pitfalls of immature apostles: They are unable to discern the constant flood of good and innovative ideas they have from the God-ideas that are being *given to* them. They try out something new every week, never really developing any of their ideas, and jumping from thing to thing to thing. After a while, people stop following them because they have a hard time staying focused on the task at hand, and people refuse to give their time and energy to something they know could change at any moment.

Also, if apostles focus solely on initiating new ideas and rapid expansion, they can leave people and organizations wounded or uncared for. Apostles typically welcome change and risk much more than most and can run too fast or too far ahead of the flock, leaving them behind or leaving a mess in their wake.

What they need from the other gifts: The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure people are cared for and developed/disciplined rather than used or drug along behind the boat. The prophet

function is needed to ensure we are hearing from God and not acting in our own strength. The evangelist function is needed to apply the macro part of the mission to sharing the gospel with individual people and inviting them to respond.

Prophets

Key words: Truth, holiness, obedience, revelation

Description: Prophets know God's will. They prioritize listening to God. They are particularly attuned to God and his truth for today and are zealous for the holiness of God. They question the status quo, bringing correction and challenging the dominant assumptions we inherit from the culture, insisting the community obey what God has commanded.

Biblical examples: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Anna and Simeon in Luke 2, John the Baptist, Stephen in Acts 7

Other examples: Activists

Core question prophets ask: Are the people of God hearing his voice and responding appropriately?

Mature prophets enjoy: Being alone with God, waiting, listening, and calling people to obey

Pitfalls of immature prophets: An immature prophet may sense God saying something, but doesn't release it to a community of people. As Paul said, the prophet should give their sense, but it's up to the community to weigh and give an interpretation. The prophet's job is to share what they have received and then see what other people make of it (1 Cor. 14.29; 1 Jn. 4.1). An immature prophet, having received some sort of revelation, wants to go straight to application.

Also, immature prophets assume they are always right. The problem is that often times they are right, and this builds a false sense of confidence that they get it right 100% of the time. Because of this, they can become arrogant or unwilling to listen. In contrast, a mature prophet is actually quite humble because they know that any revelation they receive isn't their own and they entrust it to the community. Without the other types of leaders in place, prophets can be perceived as complainers or belligerent activists or disengage from imperfect reality and become other-worldly.

What they need from the other gifts: The apostle and evangelist functions are needed to ensure the church does not become inward-focused or unable to move. The shepherding and teaching functions are needed to ensure that truth is applied and people are compassionately led toward growth and obedience, rather than feeling barked at.

Evangelists

Key words: Non-Christians, recruiters, conversations about Jesus, response

Description: 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. They have insight into how to articulate and relate the gospel to unbelievers, and enjoy spending time with non-Christians, often reminding other Christians that there are non-Christians still out there in the world. They may be people-gatherers, and wherever they go they seem to draw others into discussion about Jesus. They are not timid about their faith and seem to easily share with others regularly.

Biblical examples: The 12 in Matthew 10, the 72 in Luke 10, the scattered in Acts 8.4, Philip in Acts 8

Other examples: Salesmen, politicians, public relations reps

Core question evangelists ask: Are new people entering into the Kingdom of God?

Mature evangelists enjoy: Discussions with non-Christians, sharing their point of view, inviting outsiders in

Pitfalls of immature evangelists: They may present a reductionist gospel that is all about getting people out of hell. While important, this doesn't include Jesus' invitation to discipleship and the availability of the Kingdom that Jesus' central message was about. When they do this, they make faith and Christianity all about when they die and nothing to do with what happens here on earth. They may also have sort of a "love you and leave you" strategy. It's like once you've "crossed the line" into becoming a Christian, they make the world's fastest baton pass to the local church or a small group and are never heard from again. They move on to the next person. This can be a jarring experience for someone who is just entering a discipling relationship. Evangelists can also be so focused on reaching those outside the church that maturing and strengthening those inside is neglected.

What they need from the other gifts: The shepherding and prophet functions are needed to ensure the church does not neglect the growth, maturity, and care for those inside the church. The teaching function is needed to help explain the gospel, helping people to understand, and to disciple new believers toward maturity. The apostle function is needed see the big picture of the mission and help keep the church moving forward.

Shepherds

Keywords: Care, counsel, empathy, encouragement

Description: Shepherds nurture and protect with a tender heart. 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. They tend to spend most of their time with other Christians and can easily empathize with others, often exhibiting lots of patience with those in need. They see needs, provide comfort, and encourage others. They get burdened by others' problems and have a knack for speaking the truth in love. They are good listeners and are easy to talk to and share deep feelings with.

Biblical examples: Barnabas, James (the brother of Jesus), elders/overseers

Other examples: Counselors, social workers, and those in care-giving professions

Core question shepherds ask: Are the people of God caring for and showing compassion for people?

Mature shepherds enjoy: One-on-one chats, showing hospitality, and helping others

Pitfalls of an immature shepherd: Shepherds like to be with people in the midst of their brokenness, pain and suffering. However, they can have a really difficult time in moving people from that stage to one where they are seeking healing, transformation, and redemption. Immature shepherds sometimes don't have the confidence to challenge people to move forward for fear that the person will be angry with them. The mature shepherd can live in this tension while the immature shepherd stays a mile away from it and will let people sit in their brokenness far longer than they should. Immature shepherds may also value stability and the company of believers to the detriment of the mission.

What they need from the other gifts: The apostle and evangelist functions are necessary to keep the mission moving forward. The prophet function is needed to ensure that truth is being spoken and people are called to repentance, even when it is hard. The teaching function is needed to help explain and apply the truth of Scripture, giving a guide for growth and healing.

Teachers

Key words: Explainers, communicators, wisdom, Scripture

Description: 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. They are excited by the truth of God's word, are skilled in explaining and applying it, and gladly hold it out for others.

Biblical examples: Apollos, Philip in Acts 8.30-35, Priscilla & Aquila in Acts 18.26

Other examples: Professors, trainers, teachers

Core question teachers ask: Are the people of God immersing themselves in scripture and incarnating it?

Mature teachers enjoy: Studying the Bible, explaining & helping others understand, applying it to life

Pitfalls of an immature teacher: Scripture can be the end rather than God. They tend to fall into dogmatism or dry intellectualism, forgetting that Scripture isn't the point; God is. Scripture brings us to God. They can idolize scripture and put it over a relationship with the living and breathing God that we come to know by means of reading and incarnating Scripture. Immature teachers can also rely on their own intellect to "wow" people rather than the authority that is given from scripture and from the Holy Spirit.

What they need from the other gifts: The shepherding function is needed to be sure that the truth of Scripture is applied to people's hearts and is used as a tool for growth and relationship, not just knowledge. The prophet function helps the community to hear from the Spirit through Scripture, rather than approaching it like a book of knowledge or history. The apostle and evangelist functions are needed to ensure that the gospel is going forward and people are being challenged to respond to Jesus and move forward on mission.

Much of this is not original to us. It was compiled and adapted based on the work of Alan Hirsch (<http://www.theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx>) and Mike Breen (www.michaeljamesbreen.com), along with our own experience.

Also see Alan Hirsch's article: http://www.vergenetwork.org/2017/05/16/activating-the-body-of-christ/?inf_contact_key=1a72849f212b1ce37a65639aaf083ce1883d00c8195d4b752e79cae2b133d9c7