

## **Ephesians**

### ***Minsters of Grace, Part I***

*Ephesians 4:7-16*

*July 13th, 2025*

## **I. Introduction**

In contrast to a worldly economy oriented around and motivated by, at best, natural self-interest, and at worst by avarice and greed, God's economy is centered on the common good of seeing one another built up in Christ. In a worldly economy, *you*, the individual, are set at the very center of your world. Fortuitously, as you seek your own gain and your own profit, that happens sometimes to benefit others, too. But that's not what God's economy says. God's economy of grace calls us to give ourselves to one another even as He has given Himself to us, so that we might be built up, united together, and filled with Christ. That's the framework for our lives, the lives we live together, next to one another, near one another.

## **II. Text - Ephesians 4:7-16**

*. . . 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . .*

### ***Extraordinary Offices***

The \_\_\_\_\_ were given to the Church to herald forth the Gospel, to sound the trumpet of salvation and call all to come in. The apostles, as ambassadors for Christ, spoke and acted for Christ, authorized and sent by Him. The \_\_\_\_\_ listed here, can either refer back to the OT prophets. But more likely, it refers to the prophets we find throughout the NT. When Jesus gave His Spirit to the Church, there was a surge of prophetic activity alongside and overlapping with the apostolic ministry. Eventually, these two offices in the Church (the offices of apostle and of prophet) disappeared. They played a \_\_\_\_\_ role, but not a continual role. Theologians speak of these offices as *extraordinary* offices: they served their function during the extraordinary life of the Church (i.e., at its founding), and after that work, the offices were retired.

### ***Ordinary Offices***

In contrast to the apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers play a \_\_\_\_\_ role in the life of the Church. Generally, these are not understood to be separate offices, but they describe different callings of the one office of \_\_\_\_\_. At Trinity we have basically *two* offices (elder and deacon). We distinguish three different kinds of elders, or three different callings carried out by individual elders: we have pastors, teaching elders, and ruling elders. The elders are collectively responsible for the affairs of the church (e.g., ruling, shepherding, equipping, teaching/preaching, leading). Within the session, while every elder holds the same rank and authority, there are a variety of gifts and callings. The office of elder was given and appointed by God to be a gift or grace to His Church in its \_\_\_\_\_ life. It is not foundational, like the apostles and prophets, but it builds on the foundation that was once and for all laid.

### III. Equipping the Saints

These offices are given their work for the building up of the body of saints. This is done chiefly by the Word and the Sacraments. The apostles and prophets laid the foundation with their words and teaching. Evangelists proclaim the Word received, especially to those outside the Church. Pastors and teachers preach, teach, and apply the Word received. This work of *equipping the saints* is at the very heart ruling and shepherding, prayer and fasting, teaching and preaching, administering the sacraments, discipline and visitations. These are the various channels of grace in God's economy of grace.

*First.* Faithful equipping is \_\_\_\_\_. Eternal life consists in knowing God. This knowledge of God is not merely intellectual. It must sink into the heart. But it must certainly transform the mind. Good pastors and elders equip the flock so that they are rooted and grounded in the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, firmly established on the foundation God laid in Christ. We want a church built upon rock, not on sand and so our work of equipping involves instructing the mind: teaching how to think rightly about God, about yourself, and about this world.

*Secondly.* Good equipping is \_\_\_\_\_. Good theology comes out of your fingertips. Good theology results in good practice. Jesus Christ is the very Word of God – and He is the Man whose life perfectly displays the character and love of God. Pastors and elders, therefore, must equip the saints, not only by teaching and instructing in how to think rightly, but in how to \_\_\_\_\_ rightly.

*Thirdly.* Good equipping is equipping, not \_\_\_\_\_. This is all carried out in the economy of grace. What we receive we pass on in order that those who receive might then pass that on to others. The work of elders does not usurp or appropriate or take on the load allotted to the saints. The work of elders is meant to equip the saints for the work of ministry – not replace them, or relieve them of their responsibilities. Fathers always remain responsible for their families. Husbands always remain responsible for their marriages.

"The seventh principle is that husbands and fathers are primarily responsible to oversee the spiritual health and vitality of those in their home. They are to rule their households well (cf. 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12; Tit 1:6). Husbands are to wash their wives with the Word of God, presenting them before Christ pure and spotless (cf. Eph 5:25-33). They are to be equipped to answer questions that their wives may have about issues that arise in the assembly (cf. 1 Cor 14:34). Fathers are to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (cf. Eph 6:4). They are to speak of the things of God regularly and faithfully with their children (cf. Deut 6:6-7; Proverbs). *Consequently, the primary calling of the Church is to equip husbands and fathers to fulfill their responsibility to shepherd their homes faithfully.*" (From Trinity's policy paper, "On Women's Ministry")

"[Ministers] must have a special eye upon families, to see that they are well ordered, and the duties of each relation performed. The life of religion, and the welfare and glory of both the Church and the State, depend much on family government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we shall undo all. What are we like to do ourselves to the reforming of a congregation, if all the work be cast on us alone; and masters [e.g., fathers, husbands] of families neglect that necessary duty of their own, by which they are bound to help us? If any good be begun by the ministry in any soul, a careless, prayerless, worldly family is like to stifle it, or very much hinder it; whereas, if you could but get the rulers of families to do their duty, to take up the work where you left it, and help it on, what abundance of good might be done! I beseech you, therefore, if you desire the reformation and welfare of your people, do all you can to promote family religion." (From Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor*)

### IV. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ