

The Five Fold Gifts

The Apostle

Apostles are pioneering innovators—literally “sent ones”—who drive kingdom expansion everywhere they go. They excel at designing scalable, sustainable structures that enable movements to reproduce exponentially. Apostles are deeply focused on their specific vision and mission, fiercely guarding core values while constantly innovating beyond the status quo. They network widely to build the relationships and organizational infrastructure needed to advance God’s kingdom on increasingly larger scales.

The Prophet

Prophets maintain a deep, heart-oriented connection to God and keep communities aligned with what God cares about: justice, righteousness, and holiness. They call people toward obedience through worship and prayer, constantly pointing to God’s profound love while unafraid to speak truth to power and cry out for repentance where needed. Prophets remain sensitive to spiritual reality and challenge false religion and injustice wherever they see it.

The Evangelist

Evangelists live and breathe the gospel, drawing others naturally into what they do. They’re gifted storytellers and recruiters who communicate the gospel in culturally relevant, accessible ways that get responses. Evangelists develop simple, memorable expressions of faith, model bold gospel witness, and know how to brand movements with appropriate messaging that captures attention and draws people toward Jesus.

The Shepherd

Shepherds build healthy, sustainable communities through intentional relationship-building and genuine care for people’s wellbeing. They foster community bonding centered on Jesus and mutual love, model community witness, and master the art of discipleship. Shepherds are radically inclusive, seek reconciliation where there’s disunity, and are committed to nurturing people—practically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The Teacher

Teachers love wisdom and revelation, spending significant time seeking deep understanding of God’s Word so they can pass it on to others. They’re naturally curious and inquisitive, building tools and resources that make learning shareable within their communities. Good teachers understand that knowledge without obedience misses

the mark—they encourage their communities to both think deeply about God and live out what they learn, building meaningful traditions that support lifelong learning across generations.

Discerning Your Gifts

All five gifts were given to the church, and all are essential. Most people carry a blend of these giftings rather than being exclusively one or another. As you reflect on these descriptions, consider where you naturally operate. Your gifting blend may also shift based on your current season of life or the needs of the community around you. Discerning and owning your gifts is an active and vital part of healthy leadership.

When One Gift Dominates

It's crucial that we resist elevating certain gifts at the expense of others. When gifts become imbalanced, unhealthy patterns emerge: apostolic dominance can become task-driven and exclusive; prophetic dominance can veer toward unhealthy spirituality or harsh judgment; evangelistic dominance can devolve into manipulative marketing; shepherding dominance can breed risk-aversion and codependency; and teaching dominance can become controlling gatekeeping of knowledge. Healthy communities need the full spectrum of gifts working together, each tempering and enriching the others.

For deeper exploration, we highly recommend Alan Hirsch's *5Q: Redefining the Five Fold Gifts of Leadership*. This book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand these gifts more fully and apply them in their leadership context. Hirsch's work provides the theological foundation and practical frameworks that inform this material, and it's worth investing the time to work through it alongside your own community.