

# Gifts for Spiritual Leadership

Thomas Robinson, *Gifts for Spiritual Leadership 1*, February 18, 2018

## Ephesians 4:1-16

<sup>1</sup> I, appeal to you, I the one in bonds in the Lord, to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling** by which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all *humility of thought* and *gentleness*, with *patience*, bearing with one another in *love*, <sup>3</sup> making every effort to hold on to the **oneness created by the Spirit** in the shared bond of **peace**: <sup>4</sup> One **body** and one **Spirit** – just as you were called in one **hope** that belongs to your **call** – <sup>5</sup> one **Lord**, one **faith**, one **baptism**, <sup>6</sup> one **God** and **Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup> But **each of us** was given **grace** [*charis*] according to the measure of **the Messiah's gift**.  
<sup>8</sup> Therefore it says,

*"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;  
he gave gifts to his people."* [Psalm 68:18]

<sup>9</sup> When it says, *"He ascended,"* what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lowest parts, the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might **fill all things**. <sup>11</sup> And **he himself gave these gifts**:

the **emissaries** (*apostolos*),  
the **proclaimers of encouragement and upbuilding**. (*prophetes*),  
the **announcers of good news** (*euangelistes*),  
the **shepherds** (*poimen*)  
and **teachers** (*didaskalos*),

<sup>12</sup> for the process of **equipping the holy people** [*hagioi*] for **work of service** [*diakonia*], for **building up the body of the Messiah**, <sup>13</sup> until **we all** arrive at the goal of **the oneness** both of the **faith** and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to **mature adulthood**, to a maturity defined by **the fullness of the Messiah**.

<sup>14</sup> **We** must **no longer be infants**, tossed to and fro and blown about by every gust of teaching, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceit. <sup>15</sup> But **practicing truthfulness in love** [*agape*], **we** must **grow up** in every way **into him who is the head**, into **Christ**, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole **body**, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the **body's** growth in **building itself up in love** [*agape*].

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## Mark 10:42-45

<sup>42</sup> And Jesus called his disciples to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you will be your servant (*diakonos*), <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you will be slave (*doulos*) of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (*diakonein*), and to give his life as a ransom for many."

## 1 Corinthians 12:21-28

<sup>27</sup> Now you yourselves are Messiah's body and all members of it, <sup>28</sup> whom also God has arranged in the church, first emissaries (*apostolos*), second proclaimers of encouragement (*prophetes*), third teachers (*didaskalos*), then powers (*dynamis*), then gifts of healings, forms of helping, forms of guidance, and kinds of tongues.

## 1 Corinthians 14:3

<sup>3</sup> Those who prophesy speak to people for upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

## Romans 12 4-8

<sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many different body parts, and not all the parts have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we ... are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts of grace (*charisma*) that differ according to the grace (*charis*) given to us: if it's proclaiming encouragement (*propheteia*), in proper relation to faith; <sup>7</sup> if it's ministry (*diakonia*), in that ministry; if you're one who teaches (*didaskain*), in the teaching; <sup>8</sup> if you're one who exhorts (*parakalein*), in encouraging; the giver, in simple generosity; the leader (*proisthanai*), in diligence; the one who shows mercy, in gladness.

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## Leadership by Community Discernment

We're starting a process to expand the group of "elders" who lead this congregation. MCOB is within the Churches of Christ, part of the "Stone-Campbell" movement of "restoration" that became distinct early in the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. (About when the Church of Christ began in NYC in 1810.) Our identity as a church centers in a commitment to the NT and all of Scripture: the church will be healthiest when it stays closest to NT teaching. No hierarchy. Independent congregations. In practice, the CoC developed a pattern of local "elders," "deacons," and "ministers," with variations. Always within a deep commitment to being guided by scripture.

The leadership of this congregation has been stable for many years. It was about 15 yrs ago, (2003) when we last went through this process: Elders: Paul Stelzer (26 yrs), TR (25), Angel Reyes (15), Lark Mason (15). All the deacons (15+), Ministry staff (17+). The community is always evolving, diverse, learning, maturing. We have quite a number of men and women who are able to bring important spiritual gifts into leading this community. On March 11 we'll ask for our best discernment of those who could best serve as leaders.

## Beginning with a Focus on God's Intention

Next week we'll look at the descriptions of "overseers" and "elders" in 1 Timothy and Titus. These are important practical guides to what we're doing. As a whole, the NT uses a variety of language and structure for the leaders of early congregations. It's important to see the fundamental values and aims that God calls leaders to. It was always recognized that leadership was both important and a temptation to be conformed to structures of power. Jesus repeatedly worked to transform his disciples' understanding of "greatness." Paul and others worked to shape communities based on the "message of the cross" not competition or hierarchy. Eph 4:1-16 gives us a vision of what Christ wants in this whole process.

1-6. (Sermon: 12-31-17). Paul starts by describing a life that fits the calling of Jesus. It leads to being able to live the Oneness created by the Spirit, uniting diversity, and to be the continuing incarnation/body of Christ. One Lord of faithfulness is One God, creator of all.

7-10. Everything is God's action and flows from the Messiah's gifts that touch every believer!

Ps 68 tells of God ascending. How? God descended among us in Jesus. God wants not only to rule but to participate in his creatures, to fill all things with his life, love, and grace.

11. Jesus/God gives particular kinds of leaders that fit his purposes: people who are sent out; those who speak to the lives of people; those who announce God's Good News, those who care for the community like shepherds, those who teach. No rulers or power brokers.

12-16. We all participate. Leaders are part of a community being equipped for service, growth in understanding, mature adulthood. As a body every part contributes to the growth.

Leaders are responsible to help us all toward the Gospel, to become that distinct life of love and oneness, uniting all kinds of people. That is God's purpose in "filling all things."