

Glorifying God by Every Member in Ministry - Ephesians 4:11-12

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on March 9, 2008

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I want to consider two basic questions with you this morning in this passage:

1. What is the pastor's role in the church?

2. What is your role in the church?

What is a pastor?

The stereotypical cliché is someone who carries a briefcase, marries people, and buries people.

Here are some answers given by the pre-Kindergarteners at Providence Christian School to the question "What is a pastor?":

Jackson said "I don't know, I think I have to ask my dad"

Jenna said, "I don't know, but my dad works at the pizza place."

Peyton said "He guards your house. He watches the people."

Faith said: "He works with wood and does Bible stuff."

Esther said: "They work?"

Charlie said: "They talk about Jesus. They work hard!"

Emma: "It's somebody that takes care of you. He teaches about Jesus born on Christmas."

One of the little boys said "He's a teacher in big church. He tells us what hymnal to turn to"

Another girl said "It's a person who goes and teaches about God. My dad is a pastor so I know!"

My favorite response – a little girl from our church said a pastor is someone who "prays and speaks into the microwave to worship God."

It's not just children that have interesting ideas, a lot of adults have interesting and divergent ideas about what a pastor is and what he should be and do.

- Some see the pastor as a sort of resident psychologist
- According to one article, the view of the role of a pastor shifted in the 1980s to view the pastor as a counselor-therapist in many settings (in fact, the current pastor of the largest church in America admits he's more of a "life coach" than traditional pastor, I would call him more of a motivational speaker who mixes some Bible verses into his talks).
- I read one website where it said some view the pastor as a personal trainer.
- In the 80s a significant shift took place in people's thinking - the pastor became a manager, or CEO. This is a dominant view today that sees the pastor as the corporate executive, the management consultant, the marketer.
- Many would think of the pastor as the president, with vice presidents underneath him, and staff in a pyramid structure with him at the top, and depending on their government structure or polity, various boards beneath or above him kind of acting like the US Congress, Senate, etc., various branches of power that keep each other in check.
- In some churches the pastor is like a Protestant Pope, with basically unlimited and unchecked authority.
- In other settings, the pastor has basically no authority, and is just a figure-head, who basically stands up in front and says a few things but otherwise should leave everyone alone. Let him be funny or entertaining, but don't be condemning sin or telling us how we should live.

- Some would say, and have told me this, that the pastor's job is to speak out about the political issues and social problems and all of what's going on in culture around us, and this person shared with me that it makes him very angry when preachers focus on just preaching what Bible texts have to say. Pastors are to be at least to some degree community activists, social activists, etc., he argued.
- I read a website this week from someone in the Emergent church movement who said his preferred definition of a pastor is a "Poet Gardener - someone who can connect with someone's imagination ... who will sow and work with something - to help grow it"
- His second choice of what a pastor is: "Fosterer of Imagination - Helping others to live the re-imagined life - encouraging divine imagination" (whatever in the world that means)
- Others would view the Pastor as Mr. Fix-it, the guy who can solve all problems, the only one we should go to with our problems, the Jack of all trades, the committee coordinator, project manager, program director, the guy we should dump everything on, Mr. Do-it-all, I mean that's what we pay him to do, right?
- A previous generation of adults tended to view the pastor as "*the minister*"

I want to show you today these views are NOT biblical. None of the things I have just described are emphasized in scripture as being the focus of a pastor or even the main role of the pastor. Some of the kids were closer than ideas some adults have.

Where are we going to go to see what a pastor is to be and do? Where else but God's Word? Ephesians 4 is the only passage in the Bible that even uses the word "pastor" so this is where we must go. We need to leave man's thoughts and traditions at the door this morning as much as possible, and by God's grace, examine what God's Word actually has to say about the role and responsibility of a pastor in Christ's church, and also what your role and responsibility is here at this church.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NKJV) 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,

The past few days as you know about 15 of us men were down at the Shepherd's Conference hosted by Grace Community Church, my former church and where I learned ministry. This week we again experienced the fruit of a church that has endeavored to make this passage its life verse and mission statement. In fact the words of Eph. 4:12 are printed on the wall of their main church office so that as you go up the stairs to where the pastor's offices are you see these words in giant print "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry"

John MacArthur has said: "If there is one passage in all the Bible that has had more of an impact on the formation of Grace Community Church than any other, it is this text. This passage really defined what we are as a church."

This passage has also meant a lot to me personally – I chose to devote myself to studying it one semester at Seminary, and as my wife and I understood what ministry really is, this shaped a lot of our thinking and mindset for ministry and our place in the body.

The first time I ever stood in this pulpit as a guest speaker and candidate here at GCBC this was the passage I chose to speak on. In God's providence 2 days earlier at the elder's meeting I sat in on, Pastor Dale had been taking the men passage by passage through Ephesians and this was the exact text they were at for that day and were discussing its implications.

I was convinced then and I am even more convinced now that this is a revolutionary passage with ministry-shaping, life-transforming truths. For some people this text may be a whole new paradigm and different way of thinking about what is ministry and who is to do ministry and why God gave pastors and teachers to His church. The simple principles in this passage are absolutely essential for any church, and I believe every one of us needs to hear again and live more in light of this message from the living God.

CONTEXT OF GLORY OF GOD

As we did earlier in our series on the purpose of the church, before we talk about our roles and what we should be doing, we also need to keep in mind the *reason why* we should do what we do, the motive or ultimate purpose that should drive all of the activities of the church. In other words, what we are called to do is to be the result of something more fundamental, which is who we *are* and why we exist, according to God and His Word. In understanding *our* ultimate purpose, we looked at God's ultimate purpose in calling out a people for Himself and in everything He does, according to Scripture, everything is FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **6 to the praise of the glory of His grace**, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him

11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would **be to the praise of His glory**.

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory**.

This eternal plan was not primarily about us and getting us to heaven. It is something much bigger. It's about God and His glory – God's glory is the purpose, God's glory is to be praised and prized (not merely perceived). God's glory is to be pre-eminent in everything.

In verses 17-18 Paul prays “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of glory**, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are **the riches of the glory of His inheritance** in the saints,

God's grace and glory culminate to a crescendo in Ephesians 3:

¹⁰ so that the manifold wisdom of **God might now be made known through the church** to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*. ¹¹ *This was* in accordance with **the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ** Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. ¹³ Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your **glory**. ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ **that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory**, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the **fullness of God**. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ **to Him be the glory in the church** and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

“To God be the glory in the church ... therefore, walk worthy”

Chapter 4 and following show us how very practically and specifically this great theme of God's glory and eternal purpose is to be manifested in and through us, as verse 2 says beginning with our humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love and being diligent to preserve the unity in the bond of peace (v. 3). This grand theme of God's glory is to be manifested in everyday “little” things like our attitude and actions in the church.

Then in verses 7-8 the emphasis becomes the grace and gifts each of us have been given by God.

And our text picks up in verse 11 where it lists some of the gifts or gifted men that Christ has given to the church.

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Evangelists

Each of these gifts or offices in most of your English Bibles have the word “some” before each of them (some as, some to be) but there's a change when it comes to the last two terms pastor and teacher. Instead of “some to be pastors, some to be teachers” it says “some to be pastors and teachers.” There's just a connecting conjunction “and” between them and there is one definite article governing both pastors and teachers. In the original language grammar there is a close relationship between these two and most of the scholars and commentators believe this refers to the same individual who is *both* pastor and teacher. In other words “pastors who are also teachers” or some would even hyphenate it “pastor-teachers.”

The N.T. does speak of teachers who it does not identify as pastors (just as we have people who teach in this church who are not pastors) but all pastors are also teachers. This is their fundamental N.T. identity, pastors who are teachers. The syntax and structure of Ephesians 4:11 “seems to affirm that all pastors were to be teachers, though not all teachers were to be pastors.”¹ In other words, pastors are always gifted as teachers, though not vice versa. Of course, teachers are also clearly listed as a distinct group in 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29 and a distinguishable gift in Romans 12:7. “Thus pastor-teacher is still an appropriate title for those in the group Paul calls pastors, but there still remains a fifth group who are strictly teachers.”²

So what is a pastor to be and do?

First, what is he? The text is clear – he is a pastor and teacher. “Pastor” means shepherd - in other word, he’s a shepherd-teacher.

This is a very fitting message on the heels of the *Shepherd’s* Conference we just came back on, a conference on spiritual leadership and ministry. They undoubtedly chose the word “shepherd” because that is the N.T. imagery and rich metaphor which is actually what the word “pastor” means but is easy for us to forget. The word “pastor” has become so professionalized and clericalized and there’s much baggage with it and tradition in our mind as to what a pastor should do and look like and dress like and act like and talk like, that it would actually do us a great service to use the simple biblical word “shepherd.” The ESV actually translates it “shepherd” here and this Greek word *poimen* appears 17 other times in the N.T. and everywhere else all the versions translate it as “shepherd.” Of course, the context here refers to a *spiritual* shepherd.

This is the biblical picture – a shepherd of God’s flock who teaches God’s people God’s Word.

- Not a politician or program manager or pop culture expert or personal motivational speech guy, he’s someone who preaches God’s Word and loves God’s people who God has placed in the local flock
- Not a CEO or psychologist or social activist or slick business marketing expert, he’s a servant-leader shepherd
- Not a lofty title, in biblical times this was a lowly service
- Not the seat of a president or pyramid structure authority, this is the seat of the pasture (the English word comes from *pasture*, the place of sheep)
- Not a high authoritative posture, but a humble shepherd who *does* have to lead and feed, but who does so with love

1 Peter 5:1-3 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder [**notice there’s not a hierarchy among elders, and Peter was not the first “Pope” or the “Chief” or highest ranking elder or shepherd**] and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

2 **shepherd the flock** of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3 **nor yet as lording it over** those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

[v. 4 clarifies Christ alone is the The Chief Shepherd – no man has that role]

This pastor or shepherd is an elder, and all elders are called upon to shepherd or pastor the flock. Notice Peter is talking to the elders (plural) in v. 1 – this is the task he calls the team of elders to do, not just one man. Shepherding is a shared responsibility of elders. It is noteworthy that the N.T. always assumes a plurality of elders, the word is always plural except when the apostle John refers to himself as an individual as “elder” (singular).

Peter himself here undoubtedly remember the charge Jesus gave him with this same word after the resurrection in John 21:16 “shepherd my sheep” (other translations have “tend” or “take care of”) and Jesus also told Peter to feed the sheep as He asked Peter if he loved Him. This is the dual ministry – leading and feeding, or shepherding and teaching, because we love Jesus. These words were remembered well by these apostles in the book of Acts as they sought to apply them.

Paul also gave the same charge to the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20

28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**

29 “I know that after my departure **savage wolves will come** in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves **men will arise, speaking perverse things**, to draw away the disciples after them.

The flock of God’s precious purchased people must be led and shepherded with diligence and vigilance, and protected from dangers on the outside and dangers on the inside, and this is the responsibility of the elders as a whole. I am not *the* shepherd or chief or captain or head of this church biblically speaking, Christ is our captain, He’s *the* Chief Shepherd, not me. I’m not at the top of the pyramid, Christ alone is, and the biblical model is Jesus Christ as Head and then underneath there is an equality and plurality of godly servant-leaders. Christ wants His flock to be shepherded or led by a team of pastors, which the N.T. usually refers to as elders.

If we want to use biblical terminology, I am happy with clarifying my role as “Pastor-Teacher” or Teaching Pastor or just Pastor. The N.T. also allows for a leader among leaders (ex: Peter with apostles, James in Jerusalem). Among elders one can be recognized by the others as devoted to preaching and supported full-time by the church so he can use his gifts more fully.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard [or labor] at preaching and teaching [another translation has “whose work is teaching and preaching”] ... the laborer is worthy of his wages

Like the apostles in Jerusalem, the pastor–teacher is to devote himself above all else “to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4) ... [Like Timothy in 1 Tim 4, the] devoted pastor–teacher among other elders is to devote his ministry to prescribing, teaching, reading publicly God’s Word, and exhorting (1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 13). He is called to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2).³

The elders here have called me to this role and asked me to use my gifts more than others, and I may have more time to preach and shepherd because I am full-time supported at the church, but that doesn’t give me a higher rank or put me at the top of the pyramid and that doesn’t give me double voting power at our elder’s meetings. We believe in a plurality and equality of elders shepherding and leading the flock of God, which you’ll hear more about in the future.

The pastor or pastor-teacher is not the Chief Shepherd, Christ is, and He gives elders the great privilege and high responsibility to serve as undershepherds in leading and feeding His flock here. We are more like sheep dogs, trying to keep the flock in line under the Real Shepherd. The flock is never referred to as any man’s, it is always the Lord’s.

What is the Pastor’s role? What is he to do?

Back in Ephesians 4:11 Paul has already made clear who this individual is – shepherd and teacher. Not a higher class than an elder, but a fellow elder. So that’s a given, that’s his gift, that’s how he functions.

Now Ephesians 4:12 makes the role or the goal of what he does very specific – as a shepherd and teacher of God’s people it says he is to be “equipping the saints for the work of ministry.”

Lloyd-Jones (former medical doctor) explains: “Equipping ... was a term that was used for the setting of bones which had become dislocated. When bones are dislocated, the particular limb to which they belong is not perfect. So the idea in the word used by the Apostle is that these different parts and portions of the body [you and me] should be put into the right alignment, should be properly adjusted, and that each one should be fully developed”⁴

The word has the idea of equipping, preparing, conditioning, training. This rare medical word has the ideas “to complete,” “to restore,” and “to prepare.” The noun is only used here, but the verb form:

- is used of repairing, mending, fixing a net (Matt. 4:21)
- to form, or bring into its intended shape (Heb. 11:3)
- restoring to spiritual health a person who has fallen (Gal. 6:1)
- someone becoming like their master through teaching (Luke 6:40)
- providing whatever is lacking in someone spiritually (1 Thess. 3:10)
- preparing to be used (Heb 10:5)
- bringing into functioning harmony (1 Cor 1:10)

There’s another verse that contains the word “shepherd” with this same Greek word for “equipping”:

Hebrews 13:20-21 (NASB95) ... the great **Shepherd** of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, ²¹ **equip you in every good thing to do His will**, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, **to whom be the glory** forever and ever. Amen.

There’s a clear connection in that verse between this equipping of believers and God’s glory. God is glorified when His believers are equipped to do the work of ministry. And in this Hebrews passage as well as the Ephesians passage, these believers are equipped to “do” something in both passages.

Who are the saints? To any of you with a Catholic background, you might think saints are those elite few in church history who were canonized and part of some holy society in the upper echelon of heaven, or you might think of some statues, or people that Catholics pray to for help. We’re not talking about equipping dead people here, we’re not talking about statues, or so-called canonized super-holy select few in the distorted theology of Rome. The word “saint” in the N.T. just means a Christian.

In Ephesians 1:1, when Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus he just says “to the saints who are in Ephesus” which he identifies as the same as those “in Christ Jesus,” the faithful, the followers of Jesus. Saint is just a synonym for a believer in the Bible.

Ephesians 4:12 says that God gave to the church the pastors and teachers (or pastor-teachers) to equip the believers for the work of ministry. My role is to train or equip YOU to do ministry.

Translation History of Ephesians 4:12 (see footnote⁵ for English translations before 1611)

KJV 1611 “Pastors, and teachers: For the perfecting of the Saints, for the worke of the ministerie, for the edifying of the body of Christ”

[Note: the first "for" is the Greek preposition *pros*, the 2nd two occurrences of "for" are a different Grk preposition *eis*]

In the KJV English, each of the phrases begins with “for” which might make you think they’re the same and all parallel statements of what pastors and teachers are here for, but in Greek it’s not the same for all 3. There’s a direct connection between pastor-teachers perfecting / equipping the saints, but then there’s a different preposition for both the work of ministry and edifying the body, which should be connected to the saints. In other words it is the saints, it is believers who are to do the work of ministry and building up the body, not just pastors.

The comma after the word “Saints” was not in the Greek (and Erasmus in his edited Greek texts even before the Reformation did not put a comma here, cf. Ernest Best, ICC), but unfortunately this punctuation and rendering has misled many to a strong clergy-laypeople separation where the leaders are the ones God gave the church to do all the ministry in all 3 of the phrases.

One writer called this the “fatal comma.”⁶ James Boice calls it a ‘small but serious error that may have contributed to the church’s blindness at this point [that] the professionals do it all ... The members of the church have no other duty than (to quote the 1906 Papal Encyclical *Vehementer Nos*) “[of] letting themselves be led, and of following their pastors as a docile flock.” But that translation was wrong! Armitage Robinson was probably the first commentator to notice it and insist that it was a mistake. He argued, and virtually all commentators since have agreed with him – that the comma should be eliminated. Without that comma, the passage says something entirely different.

Instead of giving three tasks to “ministers,” it gives one task to the clergy (“equip the saints”) and another to the laity (“do the ministry”) ... it preserves the essential intermediate step which is an “every-member ministry.” It follows that where this intermediate step is not taken, where the clergy try to do the whole work, there the church stagnates and divisions occur.’⁷

KJV 1873 revision: “for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”

Note the comma was removed (most KJV editions today are based on 1789 rev.)
Early RSV had comma, but 2nd edition also removed it

NKJV “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”

“Perfecting” was a little misleading or confusing because no human can make another perfect, and the best modern lexicon (BAGD) lists “equipping” – this improves the understanding that the saints are being trained or equipped *for the work of ministry* – that makes a difference

NRSV/ESV “to [*pros*] equip the saints for [*eis*] the work of ministry, for [*eis*] building up the body of Christ” [original Greek prepositions added in brackets]

I like this translation because it preserves the distinction in the Greek terms used for each “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” – the pastors and teachers aren’t to do all the work of ministry they are *to* equip believers *for* ministry

Historically, the Roman Catholic view of priests was that they were the ones who did “the ministry,” and their theology through the middle ages made a sharp distinction or gap between the clergy and the laity. This view has also continued in some Protestant circles, especially some high church backgrounds. But when Luther and the Reformers went back to the Scriptures, one of the great teachings they recovered was the priesthood of all believers. Eph. 4:12 takes it the logical step further: the *ministry* of all believers.

Boice writes: ‘As reflected in the New Testament, the early church often used the word “minister” or “ministry” as referring to what *all* Christians are and must do, and it never uses the word *hierus* (“priest”) of the clergy. As Robert Barclay pointed out in the seventeenth century and Elton Trueblood emphasizes so well in modern times, “the conventional modern distinction between the clergy and laity simply does not occur in the New Testament at all.” There are indeed pastors, as distinct from other Christians. But the difference is one of spiritual gifts and service rather than of ministry versus non-ministry.’⁸

J. Vernon McGee wrote:

We call the pastor of a church a minister, but if you are a Christian, you are as much a minister as he is. You don’t have to be ordained to be a minister. The pastor has a special gift, a gift of teaching the Word of God so that his members, those who are under him, might do the work of the *ministry*—they are the ones to go out and do the visitation and the witnessing. I am afraid we have the church in reverse today.

... Here is a little article that appeared in the bulletin of a small church in the East:

For centuries the principal responsibility for evangelism has been borne by the clergy. The laity were neither called to evangelistic activity nor believed it to be their responsibility. One of the most significant developments in the church (possibly the single most important development in recent centuries) is the revival of lay activity and the growing recognition that the layman is called to a ministry no less important than that of the minister. Elton Trueblood has said, “The Reformation has opened up the *Bible* to the common man; a new Reformation will open up the *ministry* to the common man.”⁹

NASB “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”

“*To* the building up” speaks of the ultimate purpose, that Christ’s body would be built up, and this can only happen when all the saints or members are a part of the work. Even the best pastor(s) cannot do it all.

*Notice the translation “service” – the English versions use “service” and “ministry interchangeably

Don't think of "ministry" as a high and holy official title, this is just the same general word for any type of service ministering to or for the Lord and His church. It's been pointed out that 'two-thirds of the sixty-six uses of [ministry or] "service" or "to serve" in the N.T. have to do with meeting physical needs. Therefore, the key to gaining the right focus on ministry is to stop thinking of serving the "church program" and to start thinking about serving the needs of people.'¹⁰

NIV **"to prepare** God's people for works of service, **so that** the body of Christ may be built up"

NET "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, **that is, to build up** the body of Christ"

HCSB **"for the training** of the saints **in the work** of ministry, to build up the body of Christ"

WNT "pastors and teachers **in order fully to equip His people** for the work of serving—for the building up of Christ's body"

Wuest's Expanded Translation: "some as **pastors who are also teachers**, for the equipping of the saints for ministering work with a view to the building up of the Body of Christ"

Amplified Bible: "His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints [**that they should do] the work of ministering** toward building up Christ's body"

Not only do all these translations agree that it is the saints who are to be equipped to do the work of ministry, but the latest and greatest conservative exegetical commentaries support this (Best, ICC, Hoehner, O'Brien), with virtually all scholars and pastors who know and study in the Greek text from all theological backgrounds, Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Arminian, Charismatic, etc., John Piper, John Stott, John MacArthur, Boice, Dr. McGee, R. C. Sproul, Ray Stedman, Hendriksen, Lenski, Fee, EBC, EGT, Translator's Handbook, etc

The pastors and teachers are not *the* ministers, they are equipping or preparing or training the believers in the church so that *they* will do the work of the ministry. Ministry is not a spectator sport, it's not a performance by a few people on stage, it's for everyone. The vast majority of ministry is not in the limelight or even an official program, but is simply you using your gifts to serve others.

It's things like getting together with other Christians, having them over to your home and talking about spiritual things, babysitting, meals for people in need, praying for each other, volunteering to help with the kids at church, greeting people on Sunday mornings, helping people move, being a part of workdays, supporting missionaries, giving to the church, helping setup, visitation, etc.

Where can you serve if you don't know where to serve? There's no shortage of needs and projects, you can talk to the elders or deacons, or talk to Jan at the information table as there are sign-up lists with opportunities. Every week there's a tear-off card in the bulletin that you can fill out to let us know you'd like to serve and you can leave those at the back. But it's not just about official things or programs, it starts with your desire to serve people that is often an informal or unofficial thing.

When the saints, the believers are all involved doing their work of ministry, that is what builds up the body as the end of v. 12 says.

For me, what makes this interpretation decisive is the context:

- verse 16 uses the same phrase “building up of the body” as verse 12, and verse 16 is all about every member doing its part (not just the leaders – this is the whole point of Paul’s argument)
¹⁶ *from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*
- verses 7 and 8 emphasize that each one has received a gift from the Lord and then the context goes on to emphasize how we are all to use our gifts

The main point: God has given the church pastors-teachers primarily to equip YOU to do the work of ministry. Every part of the body is to be a minister, which is God’s plan for the body to be built up (Eph. 4:16)

If you think of ministry or ministers as the paid staff of a church, you are hurting God’s plan.

It has also been said, ‘Christianity began as a company of lay witnesses; it has become a professional pulpitism, financed by lay spectators!’ Nowadays we hire a church staff to do ‘full-time Christian work,’ and we sit in church on Sunday to watch them do it. Every Christian is meant to be in full-time Christian service ... There is indeed a special ministry of pastors, teachers and evangelists—but for what? ... For the perfecting of the saints for their ministry.¹¹

Have you ever heard someone say “Well, I didn’t get much out of church today?” I want to ask “what did you put into it?” Is your mindset all about what you and what church can do for you, or is it the biblical focus of what you can and should do for the church? Some people say they want to get involved, but they don’t really want to do mundane things that need to be done, something that will interfere with their Saturday or personal times – something so they can feel good but not sacrifice. Beloved, all of us are to serve and minister in some way.

PASTOR’S ROLE – Shepherd, teach, equip
 YOUR ROLE – Do the work of ministry

¹ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 284. See also O’Brien (*Ephesians*, p. 300), who accepts Wallace’s analysis. Others come to the same conclusion, though without the precise syntactical argument. See John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 179; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1990), p. 250; John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp. 159-60.

² William Combs, “The Biblical Nature of the Evangelist,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal Volume 7*, p. 30-31.

³ John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 154.

⁴ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Ephesians*, p. 199.

⁵ Below are earlier English translations of this passage:

Wycliffe’s NT, 1395: And he yaf summe apostlis, summe prophetis, othere euangelistis, othere scheepherdis and techeris, **to the** ful endyng of seyntis, **in to** the werk of mynystrie, **in to** edificacioun of Cristis bodi,
 [note the distinction with “to the” (Greek *pros*) and “in to” (Greek *eis*), a distinction lost in the KJV translating of the different prepositions identically as “for”]

Tyndale Bible, 1526: ... some Sheperdes some Teachers: **yt the saintes might have all thinges necessarie to worke and minister** with all to the edifyinge of the body of christ

[note the lack of comma, and clear connection between saints working in ministry, which was obviously not “invented” by modern scholars and translations]

Miles Coverdale Bible, 1535: ... some to be shepherdes & teachers, **wherby the sayntes mighte be coupled together thorow comen seruyce** to the edifienge of ye body of Christ,

[note also lack of comma and part of saints in service / ministry, similar to Tyndale’s above]

Bishop's Bible, 1568: some shepherdes and teachers, **To the** gatheryng together of the saintes, **into the** worke of ministracion, **into the** edifyng of the body of Christe:

[similar note to Wycliffe’s from 2 centuries earlier]

Geneva Bible, 1578: and some **Pastours**, and Teachers, For the repairing of the **Saintes**, for the woorke of the ministerie, and for the edification of the bodie of Christ,

*Note for the first time “Shepherds” is substituted for “Pastors” and “Saints” is capitalized and “for the” is used for the different Greek prepositions, actually making it less clear than earlier renderings. The KJV unfortunately basically just duplicated the Geneva Bible here and followed suit through their 1789 revision, which most KJV Bibles are based on today. The 1873 revision removed the comma at least, as mentioned earlier in the body of this message, but further improvements in understanding awaited the 1900s.

⁶ Mackay, p. 185, cited by Stott, *Ephesians*, 166.

⁷ James M. Boice, *Ephesians*, p. 140-41.

⁸ Boice, 141.

⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, Based on the Thru the Bible Radio Program. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981), 5:255.

¹⁰ Kenneth L. Boles, *Galatians & Ephesians*, The College Press NIV commentary (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1993), Eph 4:12.

¹¹ Vance Havner, *Why Not Just Be Christians*, p. 63.