

Here is a description of the characteristics of an Apostle:

**APOSTLES** extend the gospel. As the “sent ones,” they ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another and from one generation to the next. They are always thinking about the future, bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing leaders, and networking.

In Greek, the term apostle literally means “sent one.” As the name itself

suggests, it is the quintessentially missional (from missio, the Latin equivalent) ministry.

It is very much a pioneering function of the church, the capacity to extend Christianity as a healthy, integrated, innovative, reproducing movement, ever-expanding into new cultures. It is also a custodial ministry—a guardianship. This ministry is therefore also profoundly interested in the ongoing integrity of the core ideas (DNA, organizational principles, or meta-ideas) that generate and maintain health across the organization.

**Apostles Keywords:** Visionary, pioneering, new initiatives, expansion

**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 drag 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.

Here is a description of the characteristics of a Prophet:

**PROPHETS** know God's will. They are particularly attuned to God and his truth for today. They bring correction and challenge the dominant assumptions we inherit from the culture. They insist that the community obey what God has commanded. They question the status quo.

This is the function tasked with maintaining an abiding loyalty and faithfulness to God above all. Essentially, prophets are guardians of the covenant relationship that God has with his people. The prophetic is also passionately concerned with living a life morally consistent with the covenant—a simple and authentic life of justice, holiness, and

righteousness. The prophet proclaims God's holiness and calls for a corresponding holiness in his covenanted people (1 Peter 1:16).

**Keywords:** Truth, holiness, obedience, revelation

**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.

Here is a description of the characteristics of an Evangelist:

**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.

The evangelist role involves the proclamation of the good news that is at the core of the church's message. Evangelism is therefore all about the core message and its reception in the hearts of people and cultures. As such, the evangelist is the storyteller, the all-important recruiter to the cause, the naturally infectious person who is able to enlist people into what God is doing in and through the church.

**Keywords:** Non-Christians, recruiters, conversations about Jesus, response

**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.

Here is a description of the characteristics of a Shepherd:

**SHEPHERDS** nurture and protect. 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. Shepherds can value stability to the detriment of the mission. They may also foster an unhealthy dependence between the church and themselves.

This is the function and calling responsible for maintaining and developing healthy community and enriching relationships. This involves a commitment to form a saintly people, nurture spiritual maturity, maintain communal health, defend the community against breakdown, and engender loving community among the redeemed family of God.

**Keywords:** Care, counsel, empathy, encouragement

**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.

Here is a description of the characteristics of a Teacher:

**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.

Teachers are concerned with the mediation and appropriation of wisdom and understanding. This is the naturally philosophical type that brings comprehensive understanding of the revelation bequeathed to the church. It is a guiding and discerning function. In the biblical tradition, emphasis falls on wisdom and not simply on speculative philosophy. Teaching, of course, also involves integrating the intellectual and spiritual treasure of the community and encoding it, in order to pass it on to others and to the next

generations.

**Keywords:** Explainers, communicators, wisdom, Scripture

**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.