



Where does the five (5) fold ministry concept come from? What is the five-fold ministry?

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The concept of the five-fold ministry is based on [Ephesians 4:11-12](#) that reads, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." The five-fold ministry has usually been defined as the church leadership ministry that consists of: (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) evangelists, (4) pastors (shepherds), and (5) teachers.

This concept of five-fold ministry has been popularized in many charismatic churches. The belief is that all five types of leaders should exist in the church to help in its growth. However, many see this teaching as problematic for many reasons.

First, there are no longer apostles and prophets similar to the apostles of the New Testament period. [Ephesians 2:20](#) teaches that the church is, "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone." While there may be leaders "like" the apostles who start new ministries, churches, or missions, the apostles of today are much different. Prophets are also something unique to the biblical period. While people may serve as prophets in the sense of proclaiming truth, there are no longer prophets who give new revelation. The Bible is already complete ([Revelation 22:18-19](#)).

Second, some Greek scholars see pastor and teacher, or shepherd and teacher, as a reference to the same group of people. In other words, it should be understood as pastor-



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to be a teacher. Since this interpretation is well supported, the idea of a five-fold ministry is not accurate; only four categories exist.

Third, evangelists were traditionally traveling ministers and Bible teachers. As a result, a particular local church would not usually have a "staff evangelist" though it may support many different evangelists. Evangelists were those who "went out" rather than those who stayed at one church congregation.

Based on this information, the popular concept of the five-fold ministry appears to present an authentic attempt to promote church leadership, yet does so on an inaccurate interpretation of [Ephesians 4:11-12](#). Instead, [1 Timothy 3](#) and [Titus 1](#) teach that the local church is to be led by godly, qualified elders/pastors (plural) who are assisted by deacons in leading the church in cooperation with the church's members. We even see this in [Philippians](#), written within the earliest decades of the church, which was addressed "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons" ([Philippians 1:1](#)). This is the biblical, New Testament model offered in Scripture that remains applicable for today.

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