

# Studies in 1 Corinthians

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## *Lesson XXXVI: Apostles, Prophets, and Teachers*

TEXT: 1 COR. 12:28-31 (NASV)

**28** And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. **29** All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? **30** All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? **31** But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

## Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. In previous lessons, we've studied chapter 12's list of spiritual gifts in-depth. For this lesson, let's take this opportunity to more closely examine each of the gifted people listed in verse 28. In preparation for this study, read Ephesians 4:7-16.

The following definitions are taken from *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*:

- a. **Apostle** (Greek: *apostolos* = "one sent forth"). The word is used both generally and as a specific title for those disciples whom Christ had commissioned to advance the kingdom of God.
  - i. *Who were the Apostles? (Matt. 10:1-3; Acts 1:26)*
  - ii. *What role were they given? What did God enable them to do that others couldn't?*
  - iii. *Does the Bible make allowance for the succession of apostolic authority?*

b. **Prophet** (Greek: *prophetes* = “one who speaks forth or openly”). In its most basic sense, the word refers to a preacher (Romans 12:6). However, in many instances a prophet was one who received direct revelation from God (Numbers 12:5-7; 2 Peter 1:18-21) and communicated it as God’s appointed spokesman (Deuteronomy 18:18-20; Acts 13:1; 15:32).

i. *How was the office of a prophet similar to that of an apostle? How were the two positions different?*

c. **Teacher** (Greek: *didaskalos* = “one who instructs others”). Also listed in Romans 12:7 as one of the permanent edifying gifts.

i. *What distinguishes the teacher from the apostle and prophet?*  
ii. *Why is the teaching ministry still a vital part of the Lord’s church?*

2. What is the significance of the order of things in verse 28 (“first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then gifts of...”)?

3. Verse 29 is phrased in the form of a rhetorical question which leaves room for only one answer (“no”). What point is Paul underscoring here?