In addition to the offices of elder and deacon, the Apostle Paul also highlights specific ministries that God has given to the church through spiritually gifted people.

**Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV)**

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors [shepherds] and teachers, 12 to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

What is the difference between the role of Elder and these specific ministry people?
The role of elder could possibly be filled by any of these people. The main distinction is that the role of an elder is an “office” which assumes oversight over all ministries of a local church. The roles Paul mentions in the above passage are ministries by gifted people with specific areas of impact. In some cases, these ministries may have a broader impact beyond that of a single, local church.

What specific ministry impact does each of these roles have?
**Teacher’s Note:** People apply different definitions to some of these roles. If your church has a different slant, you will simply need to incorporate that into your teaching.

**Apostle:**
The word “apostle” literally means "one sent with a message".

**Acts 14:14 (NIV)**
But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting:

**Romans 16:7 (NIV)**
Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

Obviously, the role of apostle was not restricted to the twelve.

What do you think is the role of an apostle?
Read the following passages and discuss some of the responsibilities of an apostle.

**Acts 6:1-4 (NIV)**

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

**Romans 15:20 (NIV)**

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

**Titus 1:5 (NIV)**

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

**Galatians 2:8 (NIV)**

For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

**1 Timothy 1:3 (NIV)**

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer.

**1 Corinthians 5:1-5 (NIV)**

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? 3 Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. 4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our
Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

Oversee discipline among congregations

SUMMARY: The role of apostle appears to be that of assuming spiritual oversight over a collection of churches. Peter assumed responsibility for the Jewish churches and Paul for the Gentiles. Some of the other twelve went to distant lands to oversee the spread of the gospel and the establishment of churches abroad.

The responsibility of an apostle is to safeguard theology, guard the church, facilitate unity within the broader body and encourage the advancement of the gospel.

The role of apostle is not clearly understood in our present culture. Are there any people you can identify as fulfilling the role of apostle today?

The role of apostle is not so much an office, such as a denominational district supervisor, but a spiritually gifted role where a person cares for or builds up a collection of churches. They have ongoing spiritual influence that is accepted and valued by the individual churches under their care. It is a situation where the churches view this person as a spiritual father (1Cor 4:14).

Why do you think the role of apostle is so important in scripture?

What might we miss by not having an apostle’s influence over the local church?

Churches will not be unified to one another.
Churches may lack encouragement and strengthening from an outside source.
Churches may lack perspective in their mission to keep reaching out into the world.
Churches may start to diverge from sound doctrine.
Churches may not effectively confront sin.

Prophet: What is a prophet?

What is the role of a prophet?
Read the following passages and discuss some of the responsibilities of a prophet.

**Jeremiah 1:7 (NIV)**
You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you.

**Deuteronomy 18:18 (NIV)**
I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

A prophet communicates a specific message from God

**2 Chronicles 24:19 (NIV)**
Although the LORD sent prophets to the people to bring them back to him, and though they testified against them, they would not listen.

**Jeremiah 7:1,3 (NIV)**
1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:…
3 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place.

A prophet calls people to repent of sin and turn back to God

**Acts 11:27-28 (NIV)**
27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)

**Acts 21:10-11 (NIV)**
10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

A prophet proclaims what God wants to reveal regarding the future.

How can you know if a prophet is trustworthy?

**Deuteronomy 18:21-22 (NIV)**
21 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" 22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

A prophet’s words must be consistent with scripture and be accurate in its fulfilment.
The following verse occurs in the middle of a discussion about orderly worship in a church.

1 Corinthians 14:29-33 (NIV)
29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

Why might God want to send a specific message to a church?

Do you think God still wants to communicate to churches today? What are your thoughts?

In what ways would true godly prophecy strengthen the church?

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NIV)
And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, …

Ephesians 2:19-20 (NIV)
19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Revelation 18:20 (NIV)
Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.

Why do you think God highlights the roles of apostle and prophet with regard to the leadership of the church?
Both these roles exercise a great degree of responsibility for representing God to the broader kingdom. The roles of apostle and prophet are not consigned to just one local church, but have implications for the broader church of Jesus Christ. They prevent churches from becoming independent factions of the larger body. They call all churches to remember there is one leader over all the churches, Jesus Christ.
Evangelist:

Acts 21:8 (NIV)
Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven.

Why do you think the role of evangelist is listed as one of the leadership ministries of the local church?
The church exists to fulfill a mission; evangelism is all about mission. The role of the evangelist is to equip God’s people to carry out their mission as a church. Gifted evangelists may be more effective than the rest of us, but we still need to embrace this mission. The evangelist keeps the importance of mission forefront in the church’s mind and strategy.

2 Timothy 4:5 (NIV)
But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

What will happen to a church that ignores the leadership function of the evangelist?

Shepherd:

1 Peter 5:2 (NIV)
Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;

Since we covered this topic in the previous study, we will not spend time on it now.

Teacher:

James 3:1 (NIV)
Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Why do you think teachers will be held so accountable?
What does this five-fold leadership team concept reveal about a single person’s ability to lead the entire church?

In what ways could you encourage and support people God has called to these ministry roles?

If we understand these roles are critical to the strengthening of everyone in the church, how might that affect how we pray for them?