

Prophets and Pastors:

Source: http://kingwatch.co.nz/Prophetic_Ministry/prophets_and_pastors.htm

Note from Tim: I will make occasional commentaries throughout this study. My comments will be written in this color.

Preface: This ministry believes in the empowerment of all 5 Offices of the gifts that Yeshua (Jesus) left to the church when He ascended. By taking from Himself and dividing the calling of each office among the church, He made it impossible for the Bride to be fully prepared for His return without complete cooperation among the 5 Fold ministry gifts. The church simply cannot be fully prepared to meet Him without the operation of every office. The church, however, has only recently (the last 2 decades) seen the implementation of the offices of prophet and apostle. Not that they have not been among us, they just weren't recognized or understood. Now, revelation on both offices is coming to light in greater amounts and the church can begin stepping into her fullness. This article is one of the most balanced I have ever seen on how to understand the office of prophet. It is however, lacking a gender balance. The author often refers to he and the man, etc when describing the prophet with only a small mention of those great women of both the Old and New Testaments, not to mention those female prophets (prophetesses) who walk among us today and have been far more acutely aware of injustices in society than men. Mostly because of the intensity of their call coupled with a far more extreme lack of recognition/affirmation than even that of their male counterparts. Please consider this also as you read (and balance) this article into your own study.

The Prophetic is Essential

The church cannot survive and grow to maturity without the prophetic and the prophetic ministry. It is not an optional extra. The Bible is clear about the importance of prophecy.

Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:39).

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith (Rom 12:4-6).

After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea (Acts 21:10).

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Cor 14:1-5).

Christianity is prophetic through and through [*and the entire Bible which consequently is why Christianity is*]. When the prophets are silent and the word of God is in short supply, the church withers and dies. If there are prophets today, their hands are tied and their mouths gagged by the clumsy democratic processes of church institutions. Prophecy is seldom heard within this establishment. For prophecy comes by the spirit of God and not by consensus or debate (Michael Harper).

For our society to be renewed, it is necessary for the church, and by that I mean individual Christians together, to become a prophetic voice to our land. We must remember the price of being a prophet. If people were given the choice of straightening the wall or killing the prophet, they will usually kill the Prophet instead of straightening the wall (Bob Mumford).

A successful church will be one that appreciates the prophetic and is a place where prophets can develop in their ministry.

Many people, churches and movements have entirely rejected the prophetic, because they were wounded by false prophets or their mistakes. However, the Scriptures clearly show that God almost never raises up a great leader who does not make serious mistakes. Some of the greatest leaders made some of the greatest mistakes but they did not let that stop them. Many Christians have a genuine prophetic gift or call to prophetic ministry, yet have been discouraged from pursuing their calling because of past mistakes (Rick Joyner - The Prophetic Ministry).

The church is called to be prophetic towards the world. This role requires the development of the prophetic ministry.

Even if we are not called to the office of a prophet, we need to understand this ministry. The entire church is called as a prophetic voice to the nations. Together we are to serve as the Lord's spokesmen to the world (Rick Joyner - The Prophetic Ministry). *Many use this perspective very open ended. They may say that since the entire church is called as a prophetic voice to the nations, we don't need a prophet in our local body. But that is not in keeping with the focus on the body needing EVERY MEMBER operating in their rightful places.*

The New Testament prophet's primary function is to open the church to the ministry of Jesus the Prophet so that he can flow freely among his people. Everyone is not called to the office of a prophet, but the whole church as a unit is called to be a prophet to the world, manifesting Christ's ministry as the spokesman for God (Rick Joyner - The Prophetic Ministry).

Uncomfortable People

Prophets can be uncomfortable people to have around. They can often be hard to take. We must avoid taking offence at their style and manner and missing what God is doing through them.

None of what I say in this study is to justify, but only to explain. How people work it out, I suppose,

will be the work of Holy Spirit. It would seem that many prophets don't know how to "turn it off". They tend to treat people (all people) with the same justice vs. injustice template that they perceive events with. In other words, they prophesy with the intent of clearly communicating God's will in a matter and they speak to people with the same level of emotion – or lack thereof. So they can be difficult to get along with because they simply process things differently. In fact, among themselves prophets can often misunderstand one another – but because they are prophets it appears more intense than the average disagreement among say 2 evangelists. This is not to say that those issues cannot also become very intense, but only to say that to the outside observer the prophets would likely be viewed as overreacting to one another or a situation far more often than the evangelists would be. Just like anyone else, prophets are different - one from another. BUT, all tend to have extremes which other 5 fold offices may not. It seems they are hard wired this way. Jochanan benZachariah (John the Baptist) is a prime example. He obviously could not turn off the justice vs. injustice mindset and tended to treat people based on the category they fit into. (e.g. Jochanan facing Herod's sin and everytime he addressed it or Herod thereafter or Elijah and Jezabel)

The prophet discerns the state of the human heart. The prophetic insight exposes things that are hidden (1 Cor 14:25). Prophets are never popular people. They are not comfortable to have around, if there is a prophet around we will be aware of our sins in a new way (Tom Marshall- The Coming of the Prophets).

Unfortunately, because the Body of Christ is so ignorant of the prophetic word, it stumbles over the messenger and ignores the message (Chip Brogden - Overcoming Prophetic Offence).

No Bible prophet ever had the same delivery or style, from David to John the Beloved. But you must learn to receive from them and most of all love them. Or you may watch them being led down a road of destruction that will lead to much confusion and defeat for the kingdom. This has already happened! And many are wounded and dying because of this very thing (Kris Couchey - Bitter Prophets).

Prophetic people create tension. When God intervenes into our orderly, calm lives, this creates a tension. We need to know how to deal with that and how to fellowship it through. Otherwise prophetic ministry can be an open door for the demonic to enter our churches. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to dismiss the prophecy and cast the prophet in the role of troublemaker (Graham Cooke - Developing Your Prophetic Gifting p.96).

The prophet is violated during his ministry, but he is vindicated by history (Leonard Ravenhill - Picture of a Prophet).

Vision was like a flame with the prophets. You have to recognize that about them, at any rate - that these men were flames of fire. There was nothing neutral about them; they were aggressive, never passive. Vision has that effect. If you have really seen what the Lord is after, you cannot be half-hearted. You cannot be passive if you see. Find the person who has seen, and you find a positive life (T. Austin-Sparks - Prophetic Ministry).

Prophets often cannot hold back the passion which burns in them as much as the passion to preach a new revelation burns within a pastor or evangelist. Especially when this new revelation will presumably solve a problem the pastor has been facing, or shows the evangelist a new way to reach the hearts of unbelievers in an area where there has been little success. While this may not make the pastor any more comfortable with the prophet's behavior, style, theology, etc. it can offer some similitude of common ground for the pastor to be able to relate to the prophet. The hardest ground to ever find common for any of the 5 fold is theology and/or doctrine. Why? I believe that to because of perspective. The apostle governs and therefore sees things from a bit of an administrative perspective "will this make things run more smoothly or cause problems?". The prophet guides and rarely is able to understand that there can be more than one way because Jesus is THE way, and they hear from the Spirit what God's direction is for individuals and the church, often only 1 step at a time – so deviation is not an option. The pastor guards and therefore filters out anything which he or she cannot reasonably

see the end result of as not of God or not right for “his/her” church. The evangelist gathers and so is usually seeing the world through a filter which removes anything which will not, in their view, lead more people to the cross. The teacher grounds and since they are so down to earth in how they study, think, reason and present information they will usually ask how something will improve understanding of God before they will accept or reject it.

The New Testament teaches a positive approach to prophecy.

Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil (1 Thessalonians 3:19-20).

Christians must be careful not to quench the spirit of prophecy. The words of all prophets should be weighed carefully. The Scriptures give clear guidelines for testing prophecies. Anything that is good should be received; the rest should be discarded.

Prophets and Pastors

Every church needs both prophets and pastor-teachers. The two ministries are complementary, but they have not always fit together well. Pastors tend to be warm loving people. This is the strength of their ministry, but it means that they can sometimes find it hard to confront evil. They love to see people grow and to see the church united, so they can be tempted to compromise for the sake of peace and unity.

A prophet would act as a balance to this tendency. Prophets tend to see things in black and white. They have a zeal for holiness and truth. Their main concern is to see the church functioning according to the Word of God, but their zeal for purity and truth can make them appear to be hard and harsh. The pastors will temper their strictness and zeal with love and grace. And whereas pastors tend to concentrate on the present, the prophets can give vision for the future.

Prophets have a way of ploughing up the ground and causing disturbance. Sometimes this is sorely needed. I know many pastors who, when encountering hard ground, simply lay a patio and cover everything up! Prophecy is attacking, stimulating and provoking by definition. Pastoring is about restoring calm and order. Prophets challenge, pastors soothe (Graham Cooke - Developing Your Prophetic Gifting).

This explains why there is such a shortage of prophets in the church. Most modern churches are controlled by pastors and the bluntness of the prophet does not sit easily with them. If the pastor is insecure, he can be hurt by the prophet's words. The prophet seems to be a nuisance and life is easier if they leave.

The third truth is that pastoral compassion and prophetic purpose will sometimes be at odds, causing friction and even conflict within the local church between pastor and prophet. So a willingness to humbly seek God together to determine His desire for congregation is critical for maintaining unity in the local church leadership (Dr Bill Hamon - Prophets Pitfalls and Principles p. 35).

The church needs pastors and prophets to fully represent Christ. It must exhibit both the love and the holiness of God. Love without holiness is compromise. Holiness without love is harshness. If both ministries are present in a Church then holiness and love will both be evident. The Church will then be a true reflection of the character of God.

A prophet's perspective is radically different from that of the pastor. He hears from God and quite mercilessly questions everything, including the pastor, from God's perspective. That, however, is his healthy and God-given duty. For that reason, there is also a historical tension between the pastor and the prophet: one is the defender of the status quo who wants to maintain the community; the other questions everything and is seen

(rightly) by many others as a threat, because he disrupts things and wants 'movement now' (Wolfgang Simson - Houses That Changed the World, p.114).

Pastors and prophets have very different perspectives on the church.

Prophets usually have a very keen sense of being answerable to God. Pastors have that sense to, but they are also very aware of being answerable to people. A pastor probably feels both concerns different from the typical prophet figures (Mike Bickle - How Pastors Relate to Prophets).

Pastors are often sensitive to things happening beyond what is of the Holy Spirit. They would rather be safe by cutting things off a little before getting in the danger zone. Their boundaries tend to be on the conservative side. On the other hand, prophets tend to be boundary stretchers. They are almost always willing to go a little bit farther than the danger zone to make sure that we do everything that might be of the Lord. Notice that both prophets and pastors have the same motivation. They are afraid of missing God. But they are each proceeding from different points of view (Mike Bickle - How Pastors Relate to Prophets).

Because of the gift of revelation a prophet may have the tendency to see things very black and white, whereas a pastor, with mercy and wisdom will often see things in shades of grey. The prophet many times may view the pastor as compromising and people pleasing, while the pastor may see the prophet as unwise and unyielding. These differences in perception can become a deficit in their working relationships, if not understood as strengths that God has given to aid one another in being more effective in ministry. Otherwise the prophet will always try to straighten out the pastor and the pastor will always strive to balance out the prophet, when more often their differences, when appreciated, are actually their strengths (Tom Hamon - The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation).

*****Both pastors and prophets must understand that they need each other.*****

Challenge to Pastors

The modern church is dominated by pastors. The prophetic ministry can only be restored to the church, if pastors allow it. I believe that many pastors have (sometimes unwittingly) obstructed the restoration of the prophetic ministry in the church. This has prevented God from doing all that he wants to do. Sometimes pastors are hostile or fearful of the prophetic due to bad experiences, but this is not an excuse for robbing their people of what the prophetic ministry can bring to their church. This is stated clearly by Tom Hamon (a pastor, not a prophet).

There are many reasons for an attitude of indifference or even antagonism toward prophetic ministry by pastors. Some reasons have to do with ignorance or with perceived abuse of those who have called themselves prophets within the body. However, I do not believe these are valid excuses today. Never in Scripture does God sanction forbidding the pure and good because there have been bad representations (Tom Hamon - The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation).

While some prophets have hurt people, *but* the reality is, that controlling pastors and inadequate pastoring have done far more damage to far more Christians. In numerous situations, a whole church has fallen when their pastor has lost the plot. Pastors have far more power over people's lives than prophets. A pastor who gets lost can do far more damage than an over-zealous prophet. Where prophets have become unruly or controlling, the reason is usually inadequate or insecure leadership. Moreover, mature pastors have no reason to fear the prophetic. A wise and God-fearing pastor, who is loved by his flock, can never be overcome or pushed aside by a prophet. Despite just these facts, the bar for acceptance really is set much higher for prophets.

The question is, why do we accept every other gift and calling among men with great failure and weakness? And yet, the ministry of the prophet who speaks hard truth is discounted with every excuse in the book! Not

only is the Word given rejected, but the prophet in particular is personally rejected. This is the great test of a prophet of high calling. I am not talking about people who prophesy. I am talking about people who have been called to the office of a prophet, which are rarer than we would like to think. The burden of words that "leadership" and "friends" will not accept can be a great one if not received and released in great brokenness. The grace to walk such a narrow path is only given to the humble, who are willing to be broken and considered radicals, renegades, and rebels. The danger for this person is becoming like Elijah in an isolation that sees himself alone as having the truth. The answer is the cross of Jesus Christ that allows no man to glory in self or the "gifts" and "callings" God has given (Kris Couchey - Bitter Prophets).

Some pastors may need to be more honest about the real reason for their indifference to prophetic ministry. The problem may be something in their own heart, rather than the prophet.

As pastors, many times prophetic ministry can understandably make us feel uncomfortable, so we don't give place for it to function. However, often that is exactly what God has intended, because we have become stuck in a rut in our predictable, comfortable routines. There are times when God wants to break in on the scene, but we are too protective of our time or our people, or our comfort zones to allow God to really do what he wants. Prophets just seem to have a way of messing up our plans. Instead of resenting this, fellow pastor, let's appreciate it, because the good news is that when God leads prophets, they bring a powerful spirit of breakthrough with them (Tom Hamon - The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation).

Have you established the prophetic in your movement? Yes, the prophetic should operate in the back rooms and in the marketplace of everyday life, but seasoned prophetic voices should also be given a platform in the church to help establish and put into place the mandates of the Lord.

Where is the clarion call of the prophetic that is sounding forth with cutting-edge accuracy? Could they be sitting in your pews waiting to be released? The way to break judgments off the prophetic and unlock them is to establish them.

Do you have prophetic voices giving divine strategies for your church? Do they give confirmation and clarity? Does the government of God back them up? If so, are they backed up by you?

Are you more afraid of a few "flakes" than you are of barrenness? Have you judged the entire prophetic movement by one or two voices that fell into sin? Wisdom is needed and it is important that character and humility has been worked into their lives. I'm not talking about budding voices that have not spent their time in the wilderness of training and equipping, but rather mature, proven vessels.

The heavy mantle of government that rests on you as apostolic leaders must be used to recognize and establish the seasoned, mature prophetic voices in your midst while allowing the young eaglets to be raised up under their wings. God wants the prophetic

We're coming into a season of release for some of the hidden Josephs. The apostolic and prophetic are going to be taken out of their old, tattered garments and adorned with new mantles of government-- wrought in the fires of affliction. They will be clothed in humility and intimacy. Are you ready?

When apostolic gatekeepers embrace and welcome the prophetic, it establishes them so they can unfurl their mantles and release their anointing. (Jill Austin - <http://www.jillaustin.org>).

I am right behind any Pastor who acts to protect the sheep from such people. That is the shepherd's job, after all. (But if all they are doing is protecting their own hide, and squashing the prophetic word - then judgment will surely follow the prophet's words - as sure as day). Prophets, let God vindicate you. Make no attempt to vindicate yourself (Andrew Strom).

These writers and many like them are headed down a good road in recognizing that the prophet and pastor are supposed to work hand in hand. There are, of course, many levels of prophet and as many prophetic personalities as there are personality traits within the human race. After all, no two pastors can be any more alike than their churches. No two evangelists will use the same scriptures in exactly the same way to achieve

the same result of leading people to the Cross. There are a few points I have never seen made though. 1) if you have no mature prophets in your church, will a pastor allow the prophet to minister in the midst of their wilderness? Many will not. Many pastors attended Bible College and/or seminary then possibly did an internship or served as an associate, youth pastor or worship pastor possibly before moving into a senior pastorate. There are very few places where the prophet can find a presbytery with which to train. Not only are there few, there are fewer still where one can receive the necessary training in such a controlled environment. Not because a prophet does not want to submit, but because the controlled environment is rarely balanced with the specific fires needed to galvanize each specific prophet. Contrary to what is shamefully popular belief, prophets do not rebel against submission to authority. They rebel against an unjust level of (often) accurately anticipated submission once it becomes control. They seek to honor God above all else and are hardwired that way. Can they control this? Yes, much in the same way a pastor can be made to submit to a board asking him to preach things which are not really ungodly but not what God has told him/her to preach. The pastor can choose to control his desire to follow God's guidance, but why would He? The motives of the heart will determine the outcome. While yes, there are false prophets using a "gifting" in the prophetic for personal gain, they truly are in the minority. The majority are drawn hard after God which is what has driven them to follow His direction into churches who will ultimately not accept them for any number or reasons (more below). Yet, they continue to follow His guidance from one church to another looking for a place to assist – not take over – it is simply their zeal which is often misinterpreted and causes church leadership to see them as a threat to the peace, balance and stability of the church. Then pastors begin turning to any word they can find from established ministries to confirm their feelings. This is only the correct thing for them to do, until their eyes can be opened by God to see what they are really doing. But it is no better than the prophet who finds a single scripture and takes it out of context to justify what they are saying. While this does not always negate what they are saying, it can send them down a dangerous path. It is likely that a prophet who truly seeks and hears God's voice could find scriptural which is sound justification for what they are ministering if they will seek without the pain of needing to feel affirmed. Pastors tend to mask their fears (not all of which are unjustified) by tagging the prophets they doubt with generalities which simply don't apply to their circumstance but are close enough to sound rational. Lastly 3) prophets tend to "church hop". Some try not to but no matter how hard they try to fit in, they don't. Again, they are hardwired to see things as just or unjust. There is simply no room for shades of grey. No matter how hard a prophet has worked on presenting the message in a receivable way, they will ultimately get that wrong. Why? Because God wired them in a way which sends a different current than the other offices and/or the church body can easy conduce. What the prophet says will eventually cause fires, sometimes hidden behind the walls of the norm. This is why the innate part of pastor and deacon which is wired to keep the peace causes them to reject the prophet so easily and write them off as a false prophet. What they neglect to see is that the fire behind the wall was a wire which was not properly insulated. Perhaps a manufacturing defect, or years of wear and tear or even a broke wire which has been arcing for years but it wasn't until the unique voltage of the true prophet came that this danger inside the walls of the church was exposed and the prophet simply followed that one step of God's guidance no one else saw. It revealed a flaw and no one likes their flaws exposed. Even if the flaw makes the entire church structurally unsound and dangerous, like a fire waiting to happen, But the prophet exposes it before it can do damage on it's own, therefore a controlled environment can be created to rebuild that area.

Pastors are often concerned about the damage that prophets can do. They should be more concerned about the effect of the lack of the prophetic in their church. Pastors have a key role in encouraging the development of the prophetic ministry.

The issue cannot be avoided. If they want to fully serve God, pastors will have to deal with the prophetic (and its problems). The church will never reach its full potential without the ministry of the prophet, but the prophetic ministry will only be restored in God's fullness if there is a radical commitment from pastors to make it happen.

Just as prophets need to purpose to develop the wisdom of how to rightly minister their revelation, so pastors need to stretch themselves to believe to minister by the supernatural and revelation and not just rely upon their developed areas of wisdom and counsel. Churches can survive without prophetic ministry, but they cannot be as healthy as they would with it (Tom Hamon - The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation).

Establishing Prophets in the Church

Most churches have no prophet to establish holiness and righteousness. They do not have a mature prophet to disciple young prophets, so God has had no choice but to develop young prophets in the wilderness. This is a second best option that produces lots of problems, but is the only way until the prophetic ministry is fully restored to the church.

This problem will have to be resolved by pastors. There is a surplus of pastors and a shortage of evangelists and prophets, which severely weakens the church. To correct the balance, pastors will have to take the initiative to restore prophets to the church. A pastor who has no prophet in his church should look in the wilderness for a growing prophet and seek to establish him in his church. Obadiah protected, fed and sheltered the prophets when Jezebel was trying to destroy them (I Kings 18:3,4). There is an urgent need for Obadiahs in the modern church.

Many apostles and prophets today are not in church at all, because there is little room for them in traditional pastor centered churches. They have been pushed to the side; they are often feared because they seem so strong, radical and different. Many have been not only marginalised but rejected, and as a result have given up on church almost completely, maybe with a last flicker and a spark of hope still burning in them (Wolfgang Simson - Houses That Changed the World, p.125).

Restoring prophets to the church will not work if the pastor attempts to control the prophet. The challenge to the pastor is to say to the prophet, "I will submit to you, if you will submit to me". They will have to trust each other by submitting to each other. This will be risky for the pastor (and the prophet), but if they commit to it out of love for Jesus, great blessing will follow. A good example of this is Paul, who started in his ministry when Barnabas found him and brought him to Antioch (Acts 11:25,26). Barnabas demonstrated great courage, because Paul was a high risk person, but his trust brought out the best in Paul. His commitment to Paul brought enormous blessing to the church.

Trust produces (**breeds**) trust and responsibility. The pastor will generally be surprised at how responsible prophets will be, if they are just trusted. Prophets will be surprised at how open a pastor will be, if the prophet is willing to submit to him.

The subject of submission is a slippery slope. I've seen examples of submission from a number of denominational churches (I've worked in several) and in non-denominational churches. Everything from evangelical to full gospel to charismatic (having worked and or ministered in each). It would seem that to some, submission simply means to respect one another and to treat one another accordingly. In others, it would seem that submission goes to the other extreme where nothing is simple and what it means ebbs and flows like the ocean, with a constantly changing shoreline due to the erosion created by the waves which crash over the people. It seems to me that Godly submission must be somewhere in between. Specifically where it applies to the 5-Fold I would say submission lies inside the giftings and callings of each with some very simple rules of government applied. The author of this article offers the perfect start below. I dare say anything added to the suggestions would be leaning toward my second example above (or too much control) and anything less, the first (too little).

Embarrassing Prophets

Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other (1 Cor 12:22-25).

Christians are often embarrassed by God's watchmen, as they can be intense, opinionated or scruffy. Watchmen maybe the eyes of the body, but they are also the bums that get rid of the "crap". If God's watchmen are not functioning effectively in a church, it will become full of crap and contaminated. So while the watchmen has an unseemly task, they are important for the functioning of the body and deserve equal concern and respect.

Encouraging Prophets

By exercising discernment a pastor can help prophets to hear the word of the Lord. They should encourage the prophets to grow in this ministry. This should be done with care. Because a prophet is sometimes negative and hard in his words, pastors often assume that he must be dealt with severely. They do not realise that under their brusque exterior, most prophets have a very sensitive spirit, which can easily be broken. They need a great deal of encouragement if they are to develop into their full ministry.

Pastors should encourage those in their church with prophetic gifts, even if they are a nuisance at times. They will eventually have prophets in their midst who can be trusted to speak the Lord's word.

What makes me prophetic? The fact that I hear God speak. What is the most personal attack that anyone can make upon my Christian walk? It is to say, "We don't believe that you heard God!" Why is this so painful? Because it goes to the heart of my call - if they are correct then I "missed it" completely - perhaps I am not prophetic... and if I am not - who am I? Very few Pastors understand the depth of this crisis for prophetic people - and as a result are very ready to say, "that wasn't God!" when we speak what we honestly believe to be the Word of the Lord. Probably they have no conception of the depth of the pain they liberate (<http://www.africaprophecy.co.za/2prophets.htm>).

The more that pastors encourage the prophets, the better they will perform. Prophets respond to listeners.

I now embrace the theory of prophecy, which holds that prophetic voices of great clarity, and with a quality of insight equal to that of any age, are speaking cogently all of the time. Men and women of a stature equal to the greatest of the past are with us now addressing the problems of the day and pointing to a better way. In these times. It is seekers, then, who make prophets, and the initiative of any one of us in searching for and responding to the voice of contemporary prophets may mark the turning point in their growth and service (The Servant as Leader).

The variable that marks some periods as barren and some as rich in prophetic vision is in the interest, the level of seeking and the responsiveness of the hearers. The variable is not in the presence or absence or the relative quality and force of the prophetic voices. Prophets grow in stature as people respond to their message. If their early attempts are ignored or spurned, their talent may wither away (Author Unknown).

Any prophetic word given within a church context is spoken into a relationship. No one can assess the state of a relationship at a distance, so the person who gives the word probably needs to be constantly assessing and building their relationships in the church. If a church rejects a word from a member the rejection says more about the state of the relationship than it does about the veracity of the word. In other words - the relationships you build with people will often pre-determine whether or not they will accept the word of the Lord through you (<http://www.africaprophecy.co.za/2prophets.htm>).

Developing Young Prophets

To a pastor, a young prophet can appear to be a particular nuisance. When first starting their ministry, prophets seem to be negative and over critical. And because they are human they often make mistakes. The trouble is that their intolerance and insensitivity can irritate the pastor. This causes the pastor to jump on the prophet, the first time that he makes a mistake. The young prophet is often so crushed that

he does not dare to prophesy again. The pastor is relieved because what appeared to be a problem is gone. What he does not realise is that he has squashed a ministry that his church really needs. Because this has happened so often, there is a shortage of prophets in the church.

There is an odd phenomenon in the church today. Perhaps not completely without justification, but odd in the kingdom of God none the less. It is odd because there is no example of it anywhere in the Word, except when the people of God were in rebellion to God. This phenomenon is that the church is quicker to trust a prophet who has been exalted but whom they have never met or hardly know, than they are a prophet who is in their midst – sometimes even one who has obviously submitted to the fires of refining and galvanizing. In fact, the one example which is emblazoned upon the hearts of most believers is when Yeshua Himself returned to His hometown – Matt 13:57 and Mark 6:4. I've meditated on why He chose to highlight the specific office of prophet and not evangelist. After all, the evangelists of the 1950's were the healers, thus the phrase “healing evangelists” which became so popular. Is it because He was operating as a prophet at that time? Did He give words which the people didn't like? Did He see things in them and announce them to the people? It's simple really. Mark 6 sums it up like this *“1 Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! 3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him.”* They questioned His training, His lineage and His authority. All because His “theology” didn't line up with what they should have heard from the Carpenter's Son. So any works God did through Him must have been “from the devil” and/or “lying signs and wonders”. They never stopped to look at His fruit. Only His doctrine, His family tree, His credentials, His everything BUT what mattered. Does He show, love, mercy, grace, joy, peace, faith, temperance, meekness and perseverance. How much of the fruit of the Spirit a prophet shows will reveal how mature he/she is, not their accuracy or the signs. But a lack of these does not a false prophet make. That may simply indicate they need more affirmation where they do exhibit those traits and more training from a seasoned prophet where they do not.

At the same time, young prophets must learn to be patient, and allow God to develop their ministry. This will take time. Daniel was just a young man when he arrived in Babylon. He was middle aged when he received his first vision, and quite old when he received his greatest visions. Jeremiah was still prophesying when he was an old man. A young prophet will only have a partial vision. There will be times when he speaks the Lord's word in the wrong spirit. God will have to allow him to make mistakes if he is to grow to maturity. He should not grasp at ministry, but wait on God to raise him up in due time. Those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Young prophets cannot emerge properly in a church that is led by a pastor alone. (The same applies to evangelists). Pastors cannot disciple budding prophets effectively. The young prophet will either start challenging the pastor and become a nuisance, or he will be stifled by the pastor and lose his cutting edge. A young prophet will develop best in a church where the pastors and a prophet are in submission to each other. He will be drawn to the prophet and will learn how to function in the prophetic from him. He will also learn how to relate to a pastor.

When he needs correction, he will generally receive it better from the prophet. A young prophet will need frequent correction and he will sometimes need to be corrected very firmly. This is best done by a more mature prophet whom he respects. When he is treated harshly by the senior prophet or becomes discouraged as often happens, he will need and appreciate the comfort and encouragement of the pastor. The young prophet will develop a healthy relationship with both pastors and prophets. If he can

grow within these relationships, he will be less likely to wander off into bitterness and isolation.

No Heroes

We should not just be looking for a few heroic prophets like the men of the Old Testament. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit means that this gift has been distributed far more widely.

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams; Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and you will prophesy (Acts 2:17,18).

In many countries, there are only a few men and women with a prophetic voice. People throughout the land have looked to these few, which places them under unfair pressure. We should be praying that God would raise up numerous prophets. There should be at least one in every Christian fellowship. Then God would really be able to bring his word to the nation and the church, and all people would hear.

Persecution of Prophets

Prophets in the New Testament age will sometimes experience the persecution and suffering faced by the Old Testament prophets. This happens when their message is not received, or when the church is not functioning correctly. This is often the situation today. Most prophets are on the edge, because there is no place for them in the centre of the church.

Prophetic people also have difficulties that are sometimes leadership induced, as they were in our case, because we as a church didn't know how to nurture and administrate prophetic ministry (Mike Bickle - Growing in the Prophetic p.130).

Many leaders are so wounded and weary from the ministries of those who presumed to be watchmen or prophets, that they do not want anything to do with this ministry today. Likewise, many watchmen have been so wounded by pastors that they have lost their trust in the leadership of the church. There is usually a lot to overcome on both sides, but those who are true on both sides will overcome this barrier. We have no choice if we are going to walk in the unity that both the Lord and the times we live in require (Rick Joyner - The Ministry of a Watchman).

Today's professional pastor may truly be a shepherd of the flock, but he is first and foremost the manager of a religious organisation. Either he is hired by the owners of the organisation or is the owner/operator of a work he created. Prophets and apostles do not so much find themselves in conflict with spiritual pastors as they do with church managers (even though both those roles may reside in the same man). This is an important distinction (Chuck McLean).

However, when the church is functioning correctly, the prophet will be at peace with the church and just another ministry within it. The treatment of prophets is a good test of the maturity of a church. When the church moves into apostasy, the prophets become more radical and drastic. In a mature church, prophets will be an integral part of the leadership.

In the New Testament prophetic activity is concerned with building a community, rather than standing against the community (David Hill).

Prophecy and the office of Prophecy, however were not often fully developed, but central to the Lord's plan. In and through His prophets He warned, scolded, blessed and healed, taught, foretold, called Israel to repentance, subdued kings, laid down revelation for doctrine, chastised and rescued. Every book from Isaiah to Malachi is written by or about a prophet.

God did not do away with Prophets and prophecy when Jesus came and the Church was born. Instead He expanded their function and power by virtue of the cross and resurrection. So the prophet ceased to be a lonely watchman who was often put to death by his own people, and became an integral part of the church which, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, learns to protect and cherish it's prophets (John and Paula Sanford - The Elijah Task).

Exalting the Prophet

The opposite problem is when prophets are exalted to a position above other ministries. A prophet dominated church is dangerous.

When a prophet is accepted and deified his message is lost. The prophet is useful only so long as he is stoned as a public nuisance, calling us to repentance, disturbing our comfortable routines, breaking our respectable idols, shattering our sacred conventions (AG Gardiner).

There are prophets and teachers who hold words from God in higher esteem than the God who speaks the words they attribute as being from Him. People seek these words and teachings. The more they receive, the more they want. Before one word is digested they are craving another. They are seeking "things" - words, prophecies, teachings, visions, dreams - but they are not seeking the Lord Himself. (Chip Brogden, www.watchman.net)

I believe this to be the biggest fear of many pastors who reject true prophets sent to their church by God Himself. But if the pastor will look beyond the circumstances of how the prophet arrived and look into the heart of the prophet by getting to know them and not adding preconceived ideas about the office of a prophet by superimposing those over the individual, they will find most prophets come with a heavy burden of responsibility to the people of that church. Yes, it's true that they do not come with a more heavy burden for the leadership than for every single person equally. But this goes back to the extreme need for justice. To feel a heavier burden for the leaders or to show a greater submission to the leaders than to anyone else is not "just" or equal treatment in the eyes of the prophet. Ephesians says that we should ALL submit one to another. Not more so to one than another.

Most prophetic people don't have the gift of leadership that is essential for a church to be healthy, balanced and safe. A church led only by prophets is not a safe environment for God's people (Mike Bickle - Growing in the Prophetic p.57).

The prophets were not leaders of men. They carried no responsibility for the Temple, for worship, for the institutional side of religion. They had no political power, no party following, no organisation, no priestly or pastoral function. They were not involved in the commercial life of the nation, neither were they rulers of men. They were simply servants of the living God whose task was to declare what he was saying to the people (Clifford Hill - Prophecy, Past and Present p.60).

The liberating gospel of one generation becomes its law of the next (Ian Breward).

If every prophet spoke only absolute truth, who would the people follow? Not the Lord, but the prophets. To prevent that, God uses cracked and foolish vessels. Every man must therefore check his own spirit, heart, and mind according to the word, whenever a prophet speaks to him in the name of the Lord. God uses cracked vessels for this very reason (John and Paula Sanford - The Elijah Task p.101).

Theology of Privilege

A theology of prophetic privilege is dangerous. God has promised to protect his prophets, but he will protect his word. Jesus warned that prophets would be persecuted. He did not say they should be protected.

Prophets are often mistreated and mistrusted by the church. That has to change. But the solution is not for prophets to be put on a pedestal immune from challenge. We need an environment where prophets are welcomed and prophecy is respected, but where prophetic ministries are rigorously assessed and prophecies are vigorously tested.

The idea that any ministry, whether pastor or prophet, must be blindly submitted to is wrong and dangerous. Far too many Christians have been lead off the right path, because they have followed their pastor without questioning his decisions. We do not want Christians to start doing the same with prophets. (emphasis added)

The idea that prophets are subject only to prophets is wrong and dangerous. Prophets do have a special role in testing and judging prophecy (1 Cor 15), but that does not mean that others do not. Anyone who is prophesied to has responsibility to test the prophecy and assess the prophet. The problem with prophets is that they can stir each other up into error. This happened in 1Kings 22. Jehoshaphat was not a prophet, but he tested the court prophets word and rejected their ministry.

When a person acts as a prophet to a nation, the nation has to decide, if the person is a prophet to the nation. It is recognition by the nation that ultimately establishes a person as prophet to the nation.

When a prophet speaks publicly, the public have the right and responsibility to assess whether the word is right and relevant to them. They should not blindly follow it. I think that we need more rigorous debate about some of the words that are spoken by modern prophets. I have publicly suggested that a couple of big name prophets have actually interpreted their dreams incorrectly. I think we need more of that kind of discussion. It would be dangerous, if Christians felt that they must shut up, no matter what they think about a word or a prophet.

On the other hand, Christians should be very careful about attacking a prophet (or any other Christian) in the wrong spirit. These attacks are usually a way of rejecting the words the prophet has spoken. If the word is true, they are putting themselves in a dangerous position. Rejecting God's word, whether prophetic or scriptural is risky, because it weakens our spiritual protection. (emphases added)

The person critiquing a prophecy must keep their heart right. They must not speak out of envy or jealousy. (That is where Miriam went wrong. They must not impugn the character of a prophet, if they do not know them.) They should be careful, that they are not rejecting a prophecy that God is speaking to them. They should remain humble. They should speak with the courtesy that should apply to all Christian interactions with other people. However, if people keep their heart right, there is nothing wrong with questioning the role of a person that other people have put up as a prophet, or a word that a prophet has put out.

There is an awful lot of prophetic junk out there. There are many prophets who have stepped up to the next level, before they are ready. We actually need more testing of prophecies and prophets not less.

Prophetic Communities

The best antidote for the heroic is a prophetic community (what I call a prophetic presbytery – which can serve as a place for the prophet to keep accountability and can also be used to prophecy to individuals for the purposes of training, confirmation and increasing understanding of the whole picture as mentioned next). The full revelation of God will only be received by a group of people seeking him together. The Holy Spirit likes to give different parts of the revelation to different people. The full picture can often only be obtained by pooling all the information received.

God is wanting to raise up prophetic communities. Individual prophets are not capable of hearing Gods word for our complex world (Tom Marshall- The Coming of the Prophets).

In Samuel's time, schools of the prophets were established, by which prophecy was dignified and provision made for a succession of prophets; for it would seem that in their colleges hopeful young men were bred up in devotion in a constant attention upon the instruction the prophets gave from God, and under strict discipline, as candidates or probationers for prophecy, who were called the son of the prophets; and their religious exercises of prayer, and conference especially, are called prophesying; and their prefect or president is called their Father (1 Sam 10:12). Out of these God ordinarily chose the prophets he sent. It is one of the great favours of God to Israel that he raised up some of their sons for prophets. Amos 2:11 (Matthew Henry Commentary).

Because this is so, we all need to build relationship and credibility that will be the foundation for the acceptance of the word of the Lord when we speak on His behalf. That takes time. It takes risk. It costs. It takes effort. Many prophetic people are so caught up with introspection that they don't take time to serve others and develop good relationships - sometimes not even in their own homes! As a result their word is most unlikely to be accepted in their local church. If it is not accepted there it is highly unlikely that it will be accepted anywhere for long.

Building relationships does not guarantee that your word will be respected. It only gives it a chance of being accepted. But without relationships there is no chance it will be accepted [African Prophecy - (<http://www.africanprophecy.co.za/2prophets.htm>)].

Who is in Charge?

There is a serious argument going on about authority in the church. Some people say that prophets do not need to submit to anyone, but God himself. Others say that everyone including the prophets must submit to a pastor. Still others say that apostles will govern the church and that pastors and prophets will both submit to the apostles. All these views are probably wrong. The Bible is quite clear.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21).

Apostles, pastors, prophets and evangelists are not above this command. They are required to submit to each other out of reverence for Jesus; just like all other Christians.

It would seem that Shaul (Paul) is trying to show us that there is a time and place for everyone to be in submission to everyone else. That this submission is not in honor to the person is much as it is a showing of respect to Christ to submit appropriately one to another. I respect to ministry, one must ask a few things 1) Who is it that calls people to ministry? 2) Who is it that decides which office to which they are called? 3) How does each office operate and how does God choose to use the people called to each of those offices? 4) How can each office be fulfilled in their calling and not step on one another's toes? All too often, it seems, the authority of the church is completely relegated to the pastor. This is not fair....don't judge my statement yet, it isn't finished. It isn't fair to the pastor. With authority comes responsibility and with responsibility comes failure which is inevitable when one is expected to fill a role they are not called to. There was a popular doctrine propagated in the 19080's which said the pastor is the prophet of the house. While in the Hebrew the word prophet is the same as the word translated messenger, this does not make any messenger a prophet. Any more than any single spoke of a bicycle wheel is the entire wheel capable of supporting the bike and rider all by itself. The underlying inaccuracy of this doctrine was the fear of the emerging prophets as Abba restored that office to the church. Many pastors saw this as an affront to the authority of their office. This, because the 1970's birthed prophets like Bob Jones (who actually began his call as a prophet earlier), then in the 1980's he was launched into prominence. Men like Bob cause pastors to fear their office would lose authority. They were right. But it was authority they were never meant to have to carry. It was a burdensome authority which carried far too heavy a weight of responsibility. But like victims Stockholm syndrome, pastors had come to identify with their captors. Due to the void in the church, which could only rightly

be filled by prophets, needing someone/anyone to fill it, pastors stepped up to the plate and began to follow prophetic giftings rebirthed into the body in the Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewals. But, being prophetically gifted and called to the office of prophet are very different things. The office carries an authority of its own, not completely like that of pastor, but no less important or less powerful when allowed to be properly filled and to operate in its fullness without control, fear or manipulation.

Instead of asking who is to govern and who is to submit to them, we should be looking for a model of church government that allows all the ministries to submit to each other, as required by Ephesians. Arguing about who should be in control will only result in division and disunity.

Restoring prophets to the church will not work, if pastors attempt to control the prophet. The challenge to the pastors is to say to the prophet, "We will submit to you, if you will submit to us". They will both have to trust each other by submitting to each other. This will be risky for both the pastors and the prophet, but if they commit to it out of love for Jesus, great blessing will follow.

Repeated by the original author - "Trust produces (breeds) trust and responsibility. Pastors will be surprised at how responsible prophets can be, if they are just trusted. Prophets will be surprised at how open pastors can be, if the prophet is willing to submit to them.

Paul was started in his ministry when Barnabas found him and brought him to Antioch (Acts 11:25,26). Barnabas demonstrated great courage, because Paul was a high-risk person, but his trust brought out the best in Paul. His commitment to Paul released enormous blessing into the church."

A church needs several pastors, at least one prophet and at least one evangelist to function effectively. There will only be unity if they are all submitted to each other. The prophet should submit to the pastors, but the pastors should also submit to the prophet. This will not be easy.

Pastors, prophets and evangelists are very different from each other and are likely to have strong views about how things should be done. A great deal of love and trust will be required for them to submit to each other; but this should be normal for mature ministries. If the cross of Jesus is at work in their lives, it will be possible for these ministries to submit to each other.

Mutual submission among pastors, prophets and evangelists will be good for both them and the church. Their unity will provide balance and safety for the church. It would also be a marvellous testimony to the power of the gospel. On the other hand, if pastors and prophets cannot submit to each other, then there is something wrong with our gospel.

Many church leaders are concerned about their members lack of submission, yet they are unwilling to submit to others themselves. If the leaders of the church cannot submit to each other, then we should not be surprised if there is a lack of submission among less mature Christians.

Protocols for Prophecy

Each church must establish protocols for prophesying during it's meetings. Graham Cooke (Developing your Prophetic Gifting) outlines some good guidelines for developing protocols for handling prophecy. Two basic principles are:

1. Spontaneous prophecy should be encouraging and edifying
2. Correction or directional prophecy should be checked with elders first.

Financial Support

The prophet's loyalty to God must take priority over his loyalty to the Church. While being sufficiently

involved to know what is going on, he must be detached enough to be objective. This means that a prophet should not be a paid officer of the church. It is interesting that Paul says that gifts of money should only be given to those elders who work hard at teaching or preaching (1 Timothy 5:17). That is, only pastor- teachers and evangelists should receive financial support. Prophets are not included because being a prophet is not a full time work. They can work part time to support themselves. An example of this is Amos, who earned his living as a shepherd. If a prophet is financially independent he will not be tempted to compromise.

Final Note from Tim:

While I am not 100% in agreement with everything said in this article, I am humbled enough by this rather extraordinary work of trying to bridge an enormous gap between the offices of Pastor and Prophet, that I had to include it as the very first pdf on our new Teachings page. This is well researched, and balanced. It focuses heavily on the hurt of a prophet, presumably because it is such a vast problem within the church, but possibly also because the author speaks from experience – possibly a prophet who has been rejected repeatedly and eventually found that to avoid rejection they needed to either build a ministry of their own (which can be great but carries innate dangers of it's own) or to write about it in hopes of healing wounds and, as I said before, build a bridge. Please take this to heart. Please pray earnestly on this topic. Please seek Abba for how you may have contributed to hurting or healing this dilemma. Please know this is not an attack on anyone, but an issue I felt Abba leading me to prepare something on when He led me to this article from New Zealand, while I am serving in China!! Why reinvent the wheel, instead give credit to the inventor and add your own flare I say. LOL