Prophetic Character

Introduction

The average believer thinks of New Testament prophets as simply an extension of Old Testament prophets. It is expected that the new prophets will behave and act like the old prophets. This is simply not true. As we have already said in this series prophets in the New Testament are different and have a different goal than the Old Testament prophets.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (Hebrews 1:1-2 NKJV)

This means that those who speak prophetically should reflect the character of Jesus, who was the Word made flesh. Part of maturing as a prophet includes being conformed to the image of Jesus; that is, the Word must be made flesh in us also. However, the prophetically called tend to have a particular type of personality in the natural, which will hinder them from fulfilling the fullness of their calling if they don't embrace the process of change.

The Basic Character

The personality characteristics that are inherent in one called prophetically are challenging to others. Those called as prophets usually have a “hard core” personality—they are usually abrasive to others. They tend to speak in absolutes without any apparent mercy or compromise. This is the natural state of their personality. As a consequence, there is a measure of conflict expressed in their relationships. Because of this, others begin to distance themselves from them, which results in the prophetically called becoming loners with feelings of alienation, being on the outside looking in, feeling like a “fifth” wheel when around other people. This causes the prophetically called to withdraw into themselves, which is a great mistake.

Deep within all of those who are prophetically called (at least all that I have known, including myself) is a core identity problem that is expressed as insecurity and/or a need for approval. The overconfident personality that they express is an attempt to overcome their internal security and approval issues.

There is a danger in one becoming a false prophet when the need for the approval and acceptance of men override the acceptance and approval of the Lord. A prophetically gifted person must learn to be absolutely unshakeable in who he is in the Lord. He must learn to separate people's response to any prophetic word that he might give from his own identity. We must allow people to reject a word without accepting it as a rejection of ourselves.

God did not design any of us to be loners, including prophetic people. While we may be alone for a
season, we are not to isolate ourselves on a long term basis. The Holy Spirit works in us to cause us to desire to be with other believers in order to give and receive of the life of the Lord and the fellowship of the Spirit. However, many prophetic people do seem to live their lives as loners. This is because others, through not understanding the working and gifting of the Spirit, have hurt them deeply and they have withdrawn themselves from close fellowship. Many times this has resulted from the fact that the prophet forcefully presented the word of the Lord in a way that was not conducive with the character of Jesus and it was consequently rejected by the recipient, which was received by the prophet as a rejection of himself.

We receive our prophetic gifting in seed form. Seeds have very little resemblance to the full grown plant. Anyone looking at a two-week-old fetus would never be able to describe what the full-grown person would look like. Likewise, we can’t take a tadpole out of the water, place it on land and say to it, “you’re a frog, so jump”. There must be a growth process that causes the tadpole to grow legs and be able to breath air.

So it is with the prophetic—there must be a growth process, which takes time. There is no such thing as “instant spirituality”, even for one who is gifted by the Holy Spirit and who has a call upon his life for ministry. Embracing the process of change is absolutely mandatory for a prophet if he is to fulfill his calling. The gifting comes from the Lord. Its effectiveness and value is determined by the instrument through which it comes. The Lord is not looking for automatons who are divorced from the process but is, instead, looking for those who will take His yoke upon themselves and partner with Him for ministry.

The Place of the Prophet

The place and function of a prophet plays a key role in the purposes of God. They form part of the Church foundation along with the apostles and Jesus Christ.

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-20 NKJV)

These scriptures are not talking about the Old Testament prophets because the apostles are mentioned first. When referring to the Old Testament, the scriptures usually say “the law and the prophets”.

It is to the apostles and prophets that God reveals His mysteries. They then make those known to the rest of the people of God.

which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: (Ephesians 3:5 NKJV)

God has set an order of importance (of function not value and not authority) in the Church, which puts the apostles, prophets, and teachers at the head of the list. In any building endeavor there are some things that must be done first and other things done second and still other things done third and so on and so forth. The same is true as the Lord build His Church.
And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28 NKJV)

The meaning of “appointed”: Strong's #G5087, tithēmi; to place, lay, set: it is translated in the NASB as “appointed (6), assign (2), committed (1), conceived (1), destined (1), down *(4), falling (1), fixed (1), kept (1), kneeling *(2), knelt *(3), laid (22), laid aside (1), laid down (1), lay (4), lay...down (2), lay down (8), laying (2), lays down (1), made (4), make (4), offer (1), placed (4), present (1), purposed (1), put (15), puts (2), puts...away (1), putting (1), reached (1), serves (1), set...down (1), set down (1), sink (1)”.

This word is translated 22 times as “laid”. When read this way “God has laid in the church...” it gives us a different understanding than we may have previously entertained. This fits with the idea of the apostles and prophets as part of the foundation. When a “church” is built, the order of ministry that is required to be laid in the “church” is first the apostles, second, the prophets, thirdly, the teachers, then miracles, etc.

**Giving and Receiving Prophecy**

When giving or receiving prophecy there are three areas that need to be considered by both the one giving the word and the one receiving it:

1. Revelation, (raw data)
2. Interpretation, and
3. Application.

The one who is prophesying may have a correct revelation but while giving it may interpret it in an incorrect manner thus presenting the word in an incorrect way or the one receiving the word may also interpret it incorrectly. If you do this it will cause a correct word to be perceived as an incorrect word.

Even if the first two steps occur correctly, many times the word will be applied to our life circumstances incorrectly. Usually, this happens in the area of timing. Many words may not be applicable to your situation until a future time or set of circumstances.

Timing is the hardest area for one who is prophetically called to deal with because our tendency is to think that everything is for “right now”. For a prophetic word to have impact it must be a revelation from the Holy Spirit which is correctly interpreted and expressed in the correct manner at the correct time according to the plan and purpose of the Lord.

**Tests of Prophetic Relationship to the Lord**

There are six character areas in the prophet that must be purified and consecrated to the Lord before the Lord can fully release the prophet into the fullness of his ministry. The Lord will put these areas to the
test until they acceptable to Him. (I have grouped these in pairs that go together in the way the Lord works on us).

- **Surrender and consecration**: willingness to speak the hard word and accept the persecution and reproach that results from its delivery.

- **Honesty and integrity**: ability to remain silent when God has not spoken regardless of the apparent need of the moment.

- **Maturity and security**: willingness to be silent when God has spoken or given revelation but requires you to keep quiet about it.

Before maturing a prophet has to pass all of these tests. Many times prophetic people act like a child who has a secret and can’t wait to tell it to someone. Another problem area is the tendency to always want to get the credit for God speaking—almost, a “I told you so” syndrome.

As you begin to move in the prophetic, there are three areas that must be addressed quickly.

- **Timing**—not only must the word be a correct word from the Lord, it must be delivered at the correct time and in the appropriate place. Timing is difficult because prophets tend to be task-oriented people. They want to accomplish the goal. They put agendas before relationships. Rather than wait on the proper time, they want to give the word and move on.

- **Harshness**—there is a tendency for those newly moving in the prophetic to give harsh words, full of doom and gloom. Consider the heart of the Lord and deliver the prophetic with the proper emotions. Don’t make the mistake of Moses when he was angry with the people and God wasn’t.

- **Pride**—we puff up very quickly. Just remember, God can speak through any ass—just like He did to Balaam!

Prophetic people tend to wear themselves out. Jeremiah gives us an important perspective.

"If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan? (Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV)

There are some important lessons here. First, we should evaluate ourselves and not extend into areas for which we don’t have the strength or stamina. Second, we need to find our “cruising speed”—the pace that doesn’t wear us out. Third, expect the Lord to provide ways of strengthening or increasing our abilities in order to accomplish His work.

**CAUTION: POTENTIAL PROBLEM AREAS**

Prophetic people (those who are open to being used by the Holy Spirit) typically will have one of two basic problems that hinder them from contributing to the Body.
In the twelfth chapter of Corinthians Paul speaks of those who would say that because they weren’t the hand, or the ear, or the eye then they weren’t a part of the Body. We look at others and their function in the Body and our feelings of inferiority cause us to believe that because we don’t have the same function as others then we must not be a part.

Superiority—In this same chapter Paul goes on to speak of the other side of the problem. The eye can’t say to the hand, “I have no need of you.” This is one of the greatest dangers to one who is prophetically gifted. Pride causes them to begin to feel superior to the other members of the Body and that they don’t need them to be “spiritual”.

NOTE: God is no respecter of persons. If either of these attitudes is loose in the assembly then the Holy Spirit will shut off the flow of the gifts and His anointing.

PROBLEM AREAS

These problem areas are applicable to both the prophetic ministry and to the Prophets and are presented as a combined list.

- **False spirituality**: The person assumes a persona that he believes to be the way a “spiritual” person would look and act. As a consistent expression of the prophetic, they can take on a “wild-eyed” expression, speak in a deep resonant voice, utilize “spiritual language”, that is, “Thus saith the Lord God” in King James English, and raise their voices in loud declaratory shouting. While at times, some of these things may be appropriate; they should not be the norm.

- **Always right**: Because the person is hearing from God, he will begin to take a stance of always being right, hearing right, and speaking right. They forget that we hold the treasure in an earthen vessel.

- **Uncorrectable**: This is a result of the “always right” problem. Once a person believes that he is right, it becomes very difficult for them to receive anything that would differ from their perception.

- **Clone syndrome**: “If you were really close to the Lord like I am, you would be doing the same thing that I am doing (and doing it the same way)”. God doesn’t produce clones; He produces sons and daughters.

- **Gifts = character**: This becomes an incorrect assumption among prophetic people. Gifts are just that—gifts. They are not earned nor bestowed as an act of approval. Character development is a requirement of maturing in God. It doesn’t matter how many nor how powerful the gifts, we are not excused from the proper development of Godly character.

- **Gifts = doctrinal accuracy**: This problem is a corollary of the one above and is very
dangerous to the Church. Gifted and prophetic people make the incorrect assumption that God has put His stamp of approval on their doctrine. For some reason, Prophets always want to operate in other gifting areas when they are not called in that manner. The result is muddled, confused, and erroneous teaching that leads many astray from the purposes of God, which causes hurt, bitterness, and unforgiveness.

- **Gifts = maturity:** Gifts of Grace are given to all levels of maturity. They are not merit badges, nor earned by consecration. Sometimes this will encourage some to “fake it” so as not to appear un-gifted.

- **Anointing hype:** Methodology or style does not produce anointing. Neither gifts nor anointing are a divine endorsement of ministry style. The anointing is not dependent upon mood or atmosphere. Methodology becomes a prop and leads to hype and exaggeration. We desire to never look weak; however, Paul delighted in weakness (see 2 Cor. 9-10).

- **High mindedness:** Prophetic people need to guard against becoming high minded and thinking more highly of themselves than they should. Most prophetic people do not have a gift of leadership, which is why the scriptures link prophets with apostles. A leader of prophetically gifted people needs to understand the gifting and operation of the prophetic, but doesn’t necessarily need to be a prophetically gifted person himself.