

The Pastor - Prophetic Relationship

I. An Awkward Moment

- Lady came to share a Scripture, but she had no sense of direction
- She came again in the morning, same thing
- Evening Meeting – she brought her husband ☺
- My “job” was in a prophetic/pastoral role of seeking the Lord for which prophetic words to share...this was at a time where 8-10 people would come forward.
- It all ended well, with an opportunity to attempt to help her understand the difference in her role with a “prophetic word” and my role as an overseer of the meeting. What the moment revealed, though, is the need to equip the church, pastors and prophetic people included, in how pastor and prophet/prophets work together.
- I’m sympathetic to her, as someone who is a pastor but also prophecies.

II. The Challenge and Blessing of Prophetic Ministry

A. The Challenge (Sweeping Generalizations!)

1. Prophetic people are subjective; they feel things strongly.
 2. Prophetic people see in a tunnel; this thing right now.
 3. Prophetic people can confuse interpretation/application with utterance.
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1. Pastors like a tight schedule.
 2. Pastors lay out a service, and it didn’t include “prophetic interruption.”
 3. Pastors don’t usually have a functioning “mutual submission” view of the gifts.

B. The Blessing

1. Prophetic people are among the most devoted to the local church (in my experience).
2. Prophetic people feel things deeply, and this can minister so much care than “preaching alone” won’t do.
3. Prophetic ministry often puts the “exclamation point” on what God is doing.
4. Prophets and Pastors working together lightens the load of both!
5. Prophets and Pastors “turn the diamond” on the work of the Spirit.
6. Prophets and Pastors are united in the same goal; equip, console, build up, encourage, strengthen the church.

III. The Pastor’s Unique Role in Raising Up Prophetic Ministry

- One of the challenges related to the pastor/prophet relationship is that we don’t have explicit instruction from the Scriptures on what this relationship looks like, and how pastors promote it.

- Scripture is not silent on the matter; it's just that what we have comes more in the form of narrative. We are told what was happening, not so much instruction. Can we glean from these narratives? Yes! But we aren't holding to these things rigidly.

Paul Goes to Jerusalem – Acts 21:1-16

21 And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ² And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. ⁵ When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed ⁶ and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

⁷ When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. ⁸ On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. ¹⁰ While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

¹⁵ After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

A. Lessons for Prophetic People and Pastors from Tyre and Caesara

1. Revelation, Interpretation and Application are not the same thing.¹

¹ Points 1-3 have a lot of nuance depending upon experience, context, relationship. These are not hard fast rules, but Acts 21 shows us that Paul and those gathered did not see the interpretation or application in the same light. That's ok. It is helpful for us here to remember that we truly prophesy in part. God will be faithful. Additionally, God has given a measure of revelation and faith to some who prophesy where their accuracy in interpretation and application are

- Revelation is the *primary* role of the prophetic, interpretation and application are *secondary*.
 - Important lesson from Acts 21: Paul's friends inferred that due to the content of the revelation (hardship, imprisonment) it must not be the will of God (go to Jerusalem) and therefore the application is determined (don't go.)
 - This may go beyond prophecies function for any one prophetic word, and in the case of Acts 21, Paul knew that God had already spoken to him on what lie ahead (see Acts 20:22).
 - The importance of the prophetic word is still clear; Paul was receiving yet another prophetic confirmation of what lie ahead.
- 2. Ultimately, entrust interpretation and application to God; don't confuse revelation with interpretation and application.**
- See Acts 21:14
 - The parallel experience of the pastor and prophet puts both in a similar place, which is to seek to differentiate revelation from what follows.
 - A prophetic word can certainly include the interpretive and applicable content the person who is prophesying may sense, but it is helpful to distinguish, whenever possible, the prophets sense of where revelation is complete, and what follows is possible interpretation, application and prayer.
 - Example: "I see maps, brother, with circles on the map. The circles are places you will go." Does that mean anything to you? Amazing time in prayer flowed.
 - This is akin to a pastor who heralds the revelation of Scripture, making its applicable points that are first explicit from the text, and then communicating possible application to the current situation.
- 3. Our wisdom, emotions, and desires can affect our discernment, so repeat #2!**
- 4. Disillusionment with the gift of prophecy is more often born out of interpretation and application, not revelation. So, repeat #2!**
- This is often seen with predictive prophetic words. The actual revelation may have been spot on, but something in the interpretation or presumed application didn't come to pass, and it potentially causes the hearers to dismiss the whole word, and thus miss what God intended.
 - This has more to do with the recipient or hearer (s) at times, but it is simply a reminder to those of us who function prophetically to seek to discern what the Lord is saying from what may be meaningful prayer, conversation, follow up that is distinct from Revelation.

exceptional. But we don't want everyone who prophesies to feel they aren't ready to share if they don't have a clear sense of interpretation or application.

5. Cultivate prophetic humility.

- Don't demand or expect a specific response. Leave it to them and to God.

6. Pastors, if a prophetic word sometimes gets the interpretation or application wrong doesn't make someone a false prophet.

- Nothing in Acts 21 diminishes the real, accurate and vital part the prophetic word from Agabus to Paul brought.
- Consider Paul imprisoned. Did he have moments where he really wondered, "God, did I hear you right? Am I in your will?" God used Agabus to bring Paul a revelation that would keep him anchored in the storm of his imprisonment.
- Often, the relational love, compassion, and good desires we have for someone will inform our sense of interpretation or application. That isn't wrong. We just need the reminder to entrust people, and entrust the outworking of our prophetic words, to the will of God.
- Experience on Japan Airlines...they didn't have every detail, but the confirmation of where I was headed was a great comfort on a damaged airplane!

7. Pastors, confirming prophetic words are an invitation to respond and pray!

- Many times a prophetic word awaits a "next step" that pastors are uniquely positioned to provide.

8. Pastors, encourage prophetic people. Provide help in discerning the difference between revelation, interpretation and application.

- The more authoritative or predictive you begin to sound, the more likely you've moved on from revelation to interpretation and application.

IV. The Relationship Between Pastor and Prophet/Prophetic Ministry

- 1. Spend time together.**
- 2. Travel together.**
- 3. Encourage one another; learn to appreciate each other's role.**
- 4. Make room for prophetic impressions in the planning of a service.**
- 5. Affirm prophetic ministry. Feedback is most helpful in the context of affirmation.**