

5 Protocols to Cultivate a Healthy Prophetic Ministry

The Prophetic Movement is experiencing one of its most significant moments in recent history. God is refining His prophets and prophetic people.

What is happening is not uncommon; even Paul, the apostle, had to help his churches understand prophecy and spiritual gifts. When he wrote to the church in Corinth, we often forget that it was a letter in response to the many questions they had about their faith, and among those things were spiritual gifts.

One such gift is prophecy. We can only guess what types of questions Paul had received from the churches in Corinth. It very likely included concerns, misunderstandings, abuses and extremes that may be common whenever we see prophecy or spiritual gifts in operation. However, he answered with wisdom, teaching and love. God is calling us to respond in the same manner.

We still face similar issues as the apostle Paul did in the early church. Let's examine what attitude Paul had towards prophetic ministry in general? What areas did he encourage his churches to cultivate for a healthy prophetic culture?

Paul's Attitude Toward Prophecy

We are familiar with Paul's attitude toward spiritual gifts through his writing. First, Paul says, "Do not despise prophecies. Examine all things. Firmly hold onto what is good" (1 Thess. 5:20–21). We can see his attitude as one of value, acceptance and discernment toward prophecy. His attitude was not to reject prophecy because he understood that all manner of situations would arise when believers used their gifts to serve God. Second, he says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts,

brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant" (1 Cor. 12:1). His second attitude was to teach, which is the perfect ground for growing healthy prophets and cultivating healthy prophetic cultures. He knew that the best way to approach their questions was to put in place a solid foundation. His teachings would help them avoid the traps that come with ignorance as they exercised their spiritual gifts.

Here are three areas that will be of great benefit to examine or be reminded of as we walk through this opportune time God has given His body.

Servanthood

The prophets are called to equip the saints to carry out the work that God called them to do. They accomplish this by serving the body of Christ. In Ephesians, Paul emphasized this by saying, "He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, and for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). There are two questions that prophets should answer regarding their ministry: Do I equip believers to hear God? Am I building up the body of Christ? Everything else is secondary. All prophets should belong to a local church where they serve the saints by equipping them to hear the voice of God. It also helps the prophets be planted and learn from a pastoral perspective how to serve better and work with other pastors.

In 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 14:3-4, we read the purpose of prophecy and prophetic saints. Prophecy is for the benefit of the body of Christ to edify, exhort and comfort. Just as the prophets must assess their ministry in the light of the Scriptures, the saints must do likewise. Do I use my gifts to benefit the body of Christ? Is my prophesying edifying, exhorting and comforting for the body of Christ? Everything else is secondary. Every saint needs to serve his or her local church. This helps them to cultivate a heart of service, a

team mindset and a teachable attitude.

Let Love Be the Leader

Paul understood how easy it would be to go astray using their spiritual gifts if they had no leader to guide them. For this reason, he gave priority to a fundamental truth that governs all the operations of prophetic ministry. "Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1). Both the prophet and prophetic saint must make love their leader in their ministry. An excellent way to do this is by turning 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 into questions: Am I patient? Am I kind? Do I boast, or have I become arrogant? Am I rude, or do I have good manners? Am I irritable and resentful? Do I insist that I am always correct? Do I rejoice in truth and not wrongdoing? Do I bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things in love?

Protocols

Protocols are simply principles for proper conduct. Protocols are designed to assist us in administering the graces of God for the greater benefit of His body. Pastors in local churches have protocols for almost everything that is done, a protocol for childcare, youth ministry, finances, church elders, counseling and so forth. In the same way, we can offer protocols to prophets and prophetic saints for their success.

In 1 Corinthians 14:29-33, Paul says, "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. If anything is revealed to another that sits by, let the first keep silent. For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:29-33). Paul establishes a protocol to ensure that the body of Christ receives the maximum benefit when they are receiving prophetic

ministry.

These protocols were designed to:

1. Foster order in how prophetic ministry was to take place. Prophecy one by one.
2. Encourage prophetic words to be evaluated; no prophet should ever say they don't need to be accountable or evaluated in their prophetic utterances.
3. Cultivate teachable attitudes and encouragement among the prophets.
4. Teach prophets that their spirits are subject to them; in other words, there are zero excuses for disorder or out-of-control prophets.
5. Establish a standard for measuring prophetic ministry, which is peace and not confusion.

As we navigate this season where God is reforming and refining the prophetic, let us not despise prophecy. Instead, let us examine, teach and, if need be, relay the foundations that may have been broken. {eo}

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