

How to Create a Biblically Balanced Prophetic Community

My objective in this article is to encourage all to prophesy within the boundaries of local church protocol as well as to help develop discernment in the congregation. I have found that the gift of prophecy is the most faith-building of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit; hence, it can be the most dangerous gift or the greatest blessing—which is why we need strict guidelines.

Instead of shutting down this gift, we need to properly utilize it with all the biblical checks and balances, which is the intent of this writing. Also, by *prophesy*, in the context of this article, I am referring to the simple gift of prophesy mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:3: “But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification and exhortation and comfort.”

Questions to ask ourselves, relating to the content in this article:

1. Am I activated as to my prophetic gift? If not, then why not?
2. Do I understand the importance of the prophetic?
3. Do I understand how it should operate in the context of my local church?

Paul's Stance

Paul the apostle encouraged the whole body to prophesy within the framework of the local church. 1 Corinthians 14:1 says, “Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” Further on in the chapter in 1 Corinthians 14:31-33 he says, “For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged ... “

In spite of this clear teaching from Paul, many pastors have functionally shut down the gift of prophecy because of some prophetic extremes and abuses (with this logic we may as well shut down everything in the church—since every gift and ministry gift has been abused and used in extreme ways). Paul said, related to this, in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 (ESV), “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good.”

Hence, instead of quenching prophecy we need to have checks and balances that enable us to test and validate proper prophetic ministry. That being said, let’s explore the best use of this gift in the context of the local church.

(In this teaching we are not dealing with prophetic evangelism, which has a different set of guidelines, since we are not dealing with members of the body but the unsaved outside of the context of a local church setting and/or community.)

The first thing we need to understand is that Paul always framed all descriptions and functions of the gifts and ministries of the Spirit with the corporate body of Christ. For example, in Romans 12:3-8, the motivational gifts are given to build up the church; in Ephesians 4:11-12, the five cluster gifts are for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-8, the manifestations of the Spirit were given in the context of the body of Christ (prophecy is mentioned in this passage as one of the nine manifestations of the Spirit given for the edification of the local church). The context actually begins in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 when he deals with the nature of Holy Communion as well as the attitude and proper behavior Christians should have related to discerning the oneness of the body of Christ. After this profound teaching on Holy Communion and corporate unity, chapter 12 teaches on the gifts in the context of the oneness

of the church as the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (MEV) says, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." In light of this passage, it is not a coincidence that the teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit is given in the context of the corporate nature of the body of Christ. This, of course, goes against the individualism that is rampant in the contemporary church—especially in regards to rogue prophetic ministries that claim to give the word of the Lord on social media without any accountability or process of vetting them!

The True Motivation of the Holy Spirit

Scripture makes it clear that the Holy Spirit always points to Jesus (hence, all His manifestations should do the same). In 1 Corinthians 12:3 Paul says, "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed!' And no one can say, 'Jesus is the Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

Consequently, when the Spirit is truly moving through someone to prophesy, the ensuing Spirit-induced exhortation should point to the lordship of Jesus Christ, as well as motivate all to worship Him. (Paul said this in the context of the false gifts of prophecy given by the "pagans" who worshipped idols and devils as we see in 1 Cor. 12:1-3.)

Furthermore, John the revelator said in Revelation 19:10, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Consequently, if the prophetic word points to the prophet giving the word instead of to Jesus, its motivation is of the flesh or is demonic in nature.

Jesus even said that the Spirit was sent to testify of and glorify Him.

In John 15:26, Jesus says, “But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.”

Next week I will explore the corporate nature of prophecy, including the corporate function of the gift of prophecy and the corporate protocol for the gift of prophecy. {eoa}