

10 Dangerous Signs of Prophetic Abuse

I have been in the body of Christ now since the late 1970s. I came into the prophetic movement in the early 80s and started moving out prophetically, even participating in prophetic presbytery while doing itinerant prophetic ministry. Furthermore, our local church has nurtured many outstanding prophetic leaders and voices as well as hosting numerous prophetic trainings and schools. My primary motivational gift and mode of ministry is prophetic, even when it seems like I am teaching. (I rarely use notes and teach and preach as prompted by the Holy Spirit when I am ministering.)

Furthermore, I have found the prophetic gift, including inspirational preaching, teaching and prophetic words to be the most edifying of all the gifts, as St. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14. However, with every true gift of God comes either a counterfeit and or an abuse. You can say that about all of the cluster gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. The prophetic gift can especially be very dangerous if left unchecked, since people think the words spoken are directly from God and will often obey them without question or the use of discernment. Based on all my years of operating in the prophetic, as well as mentoring, nurturing, overseeing and hosting many prophetic ministers, the following are 10 signs of prophetic abuse and manipulation.

I write this not to discourage prophetic function but as a guide to increase the level of discernment and true edification in the body of Christ. All sincere prophetic people should welcome these warning signs. If they are truly endeavoring to serve the Lord, they will welcome correction and or desire more discernment in the Church.

1. Prophecies are intentionally given to people of wealth.

I have noticed through the years that some prophetic leaders will discern who has the most money and influence in a church or conference and will target them for a prophetic word. The reasons are obvious: First and foremost, they know that business people desire to have a direct connection with God so they can make the right decisions in their high-risk field. Actually, all influential people feel this way because of all their responsibility. The motive of this prophetic manipulator is that they want the personal cell phone number of the wealthy person so they can develop a relationship with them outside of the church and perhaps receive personal donations. In my opinion, the motive is wrong, and the prophetic person is using their gift to manipulate unsuspecting potential donors. Not that it is wrong to give wealthy people a word, it is wrong when the hidden agenda is to befriend a potential high-end donor.

2. Prophecies commissioning people to high-level leadership.

Prophetic leaders sometimes give prophecies to actual or potential leaders, telling them that they are called to be an apostle, prophet or great leader. When prophetic leaders give prophecies commissioning people they don't know, in the context of a local church or conference, it is dangerous since they may be puffing up the head of an immature recipient. These are the kind of words that should not be given unless first clearing it with the person's overseer. It can also cause churches to split since the recipient can now claim to be an apostle and doesn't have to submit to their pastor's oversight anymore. What makes this prophetic abuse is the harm it creates in both the individual receiving the word and the local church where they serve. Furthermore, I suspect some prophetic people also commission people into the apostolic or prophetic because it gives them a strong link and even possibly authority over the persons to whom they give the word. By celebrating, affirming and commissioning others as apostles and prophets, many prophetic leaders and their

networks have gained them as adherents. Much of the time, these kinds of relationships are short lived because it is built upon a faulty foundation.

3. Prophecies are based upon on prior knowledge.

In the 1980s, I had a visiting minister come to our local church. Before he ministered, he asked me questions about several of our members. I was shocked when he got up to minister because he started prophesying to every single person I spoke to him about. His prophecies were general exhortations that orbited around the information I gave him prior to the service. Not only that, the few people he prophesied over without having prior knowledge, we did not speak about them, he was mistaken and inaccurate. Of course, the people who received a word from him based on his conversations with me thought he was a great prophet. However, after the service, I confronted him, and he apologized and said he would never do that again.

4. Prophecies are given for monetary gain.

There are several well-known, so-called, prophets who charge money for giving prophetic words. You can even call them up on the phone and receive a word, for a price, of course. I was told that one person charges \$5000 for a "life-transforming word." Although there are some biblical instances in which people gave gifts to a prophet (1 Sam. 9:7-9; 2 Kings 4:42), it was more of an act of honor than otherwise. The prophet did not demand it or charge a specific fee for his prophetic gift. Prophets who charge money to give words are guilty of the sin of "Simony," which is when a person uses the gifts of the Holy Spirit for monetary gain. This is something the Apostle Peter strongly corrected (Read Acts 8:20-22). Truly, whenever we think the gifts of God and or godliness is a means for financial gain, we are greatly in error (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11)!

5. Prophecies go beyond the Scriptures to teach doctrine.

I remember several years ago a famous healing evangelist was saying that he was in heaven and Abraham told him who wrote the book of Hebrews and other such things that can influence one's view of Scripture and biblical doctrines. I don't mind if someone says they visited heaven and heard amazing things; however, when we try to make the foundation of a biblical teaching an extra-biblical source, it is very dangerous. (For example, when Bishop Carlton Pearson erroneously said the Holy Spirit told him that all people would eventually be saved, which led him to preach a doctrine of "inclusion" and/or universalism). Consequently, if we allow this unbiblical mystical practice, we open a door for the enemy to put subjective revelation on the same level as Scripture, which can lead people to apostasy.

The greatest level of the prophetic will always be the Scriptures, once and for all given to the saints, and any tradition or prophetic word that claims to be equal to the Bible is in great error (Read 2 Pet. 1:19-21). Some charismatics are so extreme they put their spiritual experiences above the plain teaching of Scripture and/or are led by prophecies when making big decisions, even without a witness in their own spirit and or without checking biblical principles before making said decision.

6. Prophecies are used to manipulate relationships.

Some people will even use prophetic words to try to manipulate people into remaining close to them, serving them or even remaining their friend. I am not referring to accurate prophetic words given to a friend, employee or church member for their edification or for the sake of the kingdom, but words given for the purpose of emotionally manipulating a person into remaining in some kind of relationship. This is an abuse of the prophetic and very manipulative

7. Prophecies are used to get people to serve the prophet.

Some prophetic leaders will use the example of Elisha serving Elijah as a way of getting younger leaders to serve them (1 Kings 19). Although there is truth in this principle, it can also be used to manipulate naïve young prophetic people into waiting on older, more seasoned prophetic leaders. No matter who gives you a word, it should not be obeyed if it compromises the relationships and commitments you presently have, including to your spouse, family and local church, and if God doesn't clearly confirm it. Of course, in general, God will never tell you to leave your spouse and family.

8. The prophetic leader is not accountable when mistakes are made.

There have been many prophetic leaders who have declared words involving national catastrophes, events and even predictions about the last days. After it was clear they were in error, rarely does anyone have the guts to call them out in private or in public. Any prophetic leader who lacks a working, relational, accountability structure in their life, should shut their mouth until they get apostolically aligned for personal oversight.

9. Dramatic prophecies are given to build an audience.

Some leaders feel compelled to give a dramatic word every time they minister or are on T.V. This is because they depend on the dramatic to maintain their audience which also brings in their donations. I am of the opinion, we should never feel pressure to perform or to give a prophetic word unless the Lord is clearly leading us to do so. Case in point: One time, after I finished preaching and prophetically ministering in a church, the pastor announced that I was going to prophesy over every person in the service. I promptly took the microphone, corrected him and told him I was done ministering since I had no more of a leading to continue. I was never invited back to

that church because I did not perform up to his standards and expectations; that is fine with me since I always endeavor to minister to an audience of one.

10. The prophecies draw attention to the prophet.

Some prophetic words begin and end with self-affirming accolades describing themselves as “the man of God sent to them” or “the prophet sent to them” or even as “the voice of God” that they need to hear. While this may be true in a very limited sense, there is only one completely accurate voice and expression of the Father: Hebrews 1:1, 2. I am usually suspicious when a person points to himself or herself when giving a word. A true word both edifies the church and exalts the Lord Jesus Christ, not the speaker (1 Cor. 12:3, 14:1-4). Whenever any minister or believer points to himself or herself instead of to Jesus, we should be very leery of that person.

Paul said follow me as I follow Christ (1 Cor. 4:16). Since Jesus was not self-promoting, his so-called ministers involved in chronic self-elevation are not serving in the pattern of Christ.

In closing, I hope this article can serve as a guide for prophetic ministry in the church and beyond. {eo}

This article originally appeared at .