

PROPHETS & PRESBYTERY

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Prophets

The New Testament prophet operates on a different level to the Old Testament prophets. NT prophets and prophecy fall into these four categories:

1. Edification — 'to stir up'
2. Exaltation — 'to build up'
3. Comfort — 'to bind up'
4. Conviction — 'to open up'

In order to see how these teams function we must look at 1 Corinthians 14:

Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. (1 Corinthians 14:29-32, NLT)

It's important to note that there is an order and function to how things are done. When prophets come together within the church they are always submitted to the pastor of the church. This is important! They are not there to take over or demand, just to serve by edifying, exhorting and speaking words that comfort and bring forth conviction.

One of the things to take note about an NT prophet is that they are not infallible. No NT prophet was ever used in the utterance of infallible scripture. All prophetic words must be judged in accordance to scripture. Most of the NT was written by the Apostles.

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. (Ephesians 4:11, NLT)

Notice that these are just gifts, which are given freely by Christ and don't in any way prove that person's holiness or purity.

Also, these gifts are given to the church; in other words, the local church is the ground in which these gifts are meant to be planted, nurtured and developed.

No prophetic ministry—except Christ—was ever a perfect channel.

How do we test prophetic words and the ministry of the prophet? Let's go back to the sources of prophetic words.

1. The Holy Spirit impression

When the Holy Spirit speaks to man it's more of an impression rather than actual writing on a wall or an audible voice. This impression is then left to the prophet to act upon. As with most things with human involvement, it can be wrongly interpreted or not acted upon. But it's important to note that the Holy Spirit is the only true source of prophecy.

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21, NIV)

2. The human spirit

Ezekiel 13 clearly talks about those who prophesy out of their own hearts. There's an alertness of spirit that happens in a prophetic gathering that causes everyone to want to prophesy. We must be careful not to step out of the spirit and walk in the flesh (Gal 5:13-18).

3. An evil spirit

When Jesus asks Peter in Matthew 16:15, 'But who do you say I am?' Peter replied, 'You are Christ, Son of the Living God.' Jesus affirms this by saying, 'Flesh and blood had not revealed this to you, but my heavenly father.' In verse 23 Jesus turned to Peter and said, 'Get thee behind me Satan!', after Peter says that the death and resurrection will not occur.

Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. (1 Thess. 5:20-21, NLT)

Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! (1 Corinthians 13:9, NLT)

Prophecy is not a perfect or complete gift. So, how do we test its fidelity? Here are seven important questions:

1. Does it line up with Scripture?

It's important that prophetic words are scripturally sound. Doctrine must line up with the spoken word. The same as preaching, songs and prayer, prophecy must fall in line with scripture. Whenever Jesus spoke prophetically it lined up with scripture, the spirit of the scriptures and only what the Father said (John 5:19; John 8:28).

2. Does it carry the spirit of the Bible?

More than being doctrinally sound, does it carry the spirit of the written Word? Many things that say, 'Thus saith the Lord', or, 'The Lord will say', can be done outside the spirit of the Word. It's important that this is not violated (Romans 13:1-2).

3. Does it conform to the procedure and authority of Scripture?

Everything must be done in order and under the right authority. The prophets are subject to the senior leadership of the local church which is in accordance to scripture (1 Timothy 5:17; Ephesians 4:11-12).

4. Does it bring condemnation?

The word of the Lord never condemns but convicts. It cuts through the heart and propels us where God wants us to go without the feeling of condemnation (Romans 8:1; 2 Timothy 1:7).

5. Does it come to pass?

Too many prophetic words are given without someone saying, 'Did it come to pass?' This is important and must be adjusted wherever and whenever needed (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

6. Does it bear witness with your spirit?

Although the prophetic word convicts, it will bear witness within your spirit. Whatever is unclear should be cleared up by the senior leadership of the house (Romans 8:16).

7. Are others in agreement with the word?

There should be an agreement with the prophets, senior leaders and church. Not all things are at first clear or obvious to those listening and judging the word (1 Peter 3:8; Romans 12:16).

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. (1 Corinthians 14:29, NKJV)

diakrinō (dee-ak-ree'-no): to separate thoroughly, that is, (literally and reflexively) to withdraw from, or (by implication) oppose; figuratively to discriminate (by implication decide), or (reflexively) hesitate: - contend, make (to) differ (-ence), discern, doubt, judge, be partial, stagger, waver.

The prophetic words within the church are to be judged by the leadership of that local house: the pastors and elders.

It's important – even with prophetic words that are said to be true – that you live by the Bible and not prophecy.

Presbytery

Prophetic teams

Prophets who function in presbytery need to meet specific criteria. The word 'presbyter' comes from the Greek word *presbuteros*, from which we get the English word 'elder' in the New Testament.

This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be an elder he desires an honorable position." So an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? An elder must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap. (1 Timothy 3:1-7, NLT)

Attributes of a prophet

1. A person functioning in presbytery should be an elder in his local church. Allowance can be made for young prophets in training; however this person should not be a new convert or a novice.
2. A prophet should have a good, godly character.
3. A person who has a high moral standard.
4. A person who is not influenced by money.
5. A person who is doctrinally sound.
6. A person who regularly flows in the prophetic in their own local church.

The presbytery

Firstly, a presbytery should consist of 3 prophets, one of whom is a senior prophet who brings direction and wisdom.

Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders—Judas (also called Barsabbas) and Silas... Then Judas and Silas, both being prophets, spoke at length to the believers, encouraging and strengthening their faith. (Acts 15:22, 32, NLT)

A presbytery can include a lady prophet, perhaps the wife of one of the other prophets in the team.

How to prepare for presbytery

It's important that the candidates get themselves ready before the Lord. This will require at least 3-4 days of prayer and fasting before the meetings. This can continue during the nights of meeting, although eating lightly to regain strength is fine.

During these meetings it's important that there is a flow of worship to allow the prophetic mantle to fall in the meeting place. In turn, each prophet will prophesy over the candidate. It's important that the worship team follow the lead of the prophets as to when they should stop to allow the word of the Lord to come. It's pivotal that the word be recorded and given to the candidates for them to listen back and type it out. A meeting with their pastors or elders to examine the word together is recommended.

What happens after?

Guidance through the local leadership is given and adhered to. When it comes to prophecy, there's always two parts:

1. What God said He would do
2. What you need to do

These should always be at the forefront for those being ministered to. It's important to wait and let God do what He said would happen. He is never in a hurry and often these words take years before they come to pass.