



The Prophetic Calling

Prophets and Pastors

We have included another portion of the chapter from Ravens and the Prophet on the prophetic ministry. This section looks at the important matter of how prophets and pastors relate together. It ends with a chart that Mike Breen came up with to enable people to 'score' themselves to see if they are pioneer or settlers – whether they lean more towards to the role of a 'pioneer' or 'settler' – a 'pastor' or 'prophet'. Have a go and find out!

Prophets and Pastors: In Tandem or Tension?

Kenny Borthwick once gave a talk entitled *'Can prophets and pastors be friends?'* They most certainly should be, yet times without number, the prophetic ministry finds itself pulling in the opposite direction to the pastoral. Human personality being what it is, the diversity in the giftings of prophet and pastor is not infrequently perceived more as a threat than as an asset. This is so common an experience that it needs unpacking.

The Lord has appointed both prophets and pastors in His Church. While prophets 'see over the horizon', pastors have the task of 'implementing at ground level' what prophets have seen in the heavenly places. This is perhaps why Scripture indicates that the callings are usually separate ones: if pastors had to both give and implement words of prophecy it would make the church over-dependent on their ministry. It can also be difficult for a Pastor-Prophet to move the church forward into the things God is revealing whilst also nurtur-

ing those who are finding changes difficult to handle.

Churches led by pastors only tend to be on the slow side. By their very nature, pastors are concerned to protect their flock. The prophet, on the other hand, in their eagerness to bring to the Church whatever challenge, correction or encouragement they have heard in the Father's presence, may lead a church to race away without paying enough attention to foundational issues, like Icarus flying so close to the sun that their wings melt off!

The Scriptures do not say 'God appointed in the Church first pastors, then pastors, with a handful of elders and deacons thrown in for good measure!' Rather, they tell us that God appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets and third teachers. (1 Corinthians 12:28) It is this mixture of the prophetic and the pastoral that opens the way for other callings to find their feet and spread their wings: evangelists, those with healing gifts, workers of miracles and so on.

The 'eyes' of the Church

Prophets are the 'eyes' of the Body of Christ, helping it to find its true direction. They stir people into action, break up the unploughed ground and shatter complacent attitudes. In *The Elijah Task* (Logos) John and Paula Sandford show that when the Church has reached a point of celebration, the prophets are already crying out for it to move on in new and deeper ways. Conversely, when the people of God are bemoaning their powerlessness (and being led into times of deep repentance) the

prophets are rejoicing at such an obvious sign of grace.

Most prophets are first and foremost intercessors. They need solitude to wait on the Lord and to process what He is showing them. The fact that much of their work is done in the unseen realms of prayer and meditation is no excuse for individualism, however: prophets work best in teams! Haggai and Zechariah, for example, were doubly effective because they brought the same message to their generation in different ways, but using very different tonality. The apostle-prophet Paul was likewise no lone ranger. Have you noticed that he starts his letters with vigorous endorsements of his co-workers such as Silas, Barnabas and Titus? So even though the nature of the calling may cause prophets to remain slightly detached, their ministry to the Church is most effective when they operate *alongside* pastors and other ministries.

A necessary tension

By virtue of their intimacy with the Lord, prophets often play a pastoral role in the life of the Church, being looked on as mother and father figures to whom people can turn in times of trouble. However, we must also face the fact that there are all too many self-appointed prophets about who 'use' the prophetic medium to control others through their words. Not surprisingly, this makes pastors all the more concerned to keep watch over who is influencing their flocks – often to the point where the pastoral leadership of a congregation finds it difficult to welcome those who are genuinely moving in the Spirit's anointing. Their very desire to keep everybody together and to maintain order can inadvertently lead to the prophetic word being stifled, and a lid being placed over things that God is longing to release.

Carefully planned agendas can also make it extremely difficult for the Lord's voice to be heard and acted upon. It is as though the Holy Spirit advances – knocks – then waits – until He is obliged to tip-toe away – grieving. As John McLaughlin comments, *'The prophet's task is as much to bring the glory of intimacy with the Lord to the people of God, as to pass on specif-*

ic messages from God.' We need to hear the prophet's voice.

It is worth noting that there is an equal but opposite danger in churches where prophecy is commonplace, and that is of not weighing utterances properly. What God is *really* saying is missed in the excitement of too much apparently being spoken in His name.

This excessive caution (to say nothing of the less worthy desire to preserve the hierarchical status quo!), means that all too many young prophets are often denied the security they need to develop a ministry that calls for great maturity and that cannot possibly be accomplished all at once. Many who have received a genuine calling become discouraged and gradually stop stepping out.

This isolation and mistrust can cause enormous grief and frustration to the prophet as well as loss to the Body of Christ. If the 'eyes' of the Church perceive that change is necessary, but the leadership brushes the call aside out of concern that not everyone may be ready for such a move, a great deal will never see the light of day.

Merely ploughing on in the same direction, hoping that things will turn out all right in the end, is unlikely to be the best option! Giving in to the objections of those who want to go at the pace of the slowest (and so maintain the status quo) will likewise not get us to place God has in mind. We may well need to go back to the fork in the road where we failed to take the new turning God was indicating to us. If that means occasionally foregoing the preaching or some other part of the service because the Lord is leading so clearly in another direction, then so be it. May our Churches reach be a place where prophets are welcomed, trained and accommodated!

For Reflection

Prophets see visions and stir up the troops. Pastors (and other leaders) are ultimately the ones who have to implement the prophetic vision. Neither one is better than the other. One sows and plants, another waters and reaps.