

## Building Prophetic Community

- I. In order to grow in the gift of prophecy, God's people have historically gathered to form prophetic communities.
  - a. Old Testament
    - i. Each prophetic community had a prophetic leader/mentor.
      1. Moses (Num. 11:16-17, 24-25; 12:6-8)
      2. Samuel (1 Sam. 19:20)
      3. Elijah (2 Kings 2:15)
      4. Elisha (2 Kings 2:15; 4:1, 38-44; 6:1-7; 9:1-10)
    - ii. Each prophetic community had a designated meeting place.
      1. The tent of meeting (Num. 11:16, 24)
      2. The hill of God (1 Sam. 10:5)
      3. Bethel (2 Kings 2:3)
      4. Jericho (2 Kings 2:5)
      5. Unnamed building (2 Kings 6:1-7)
    - iii. Each prophetic community held meetings that were often characterized by:
      1. *An overpowering, contagious presence of the Spirit* (Num. 11:25-30; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10-11; 19:20-21, 23-24).
      2. *Opportunities to exercise the gift of prophecy* (Num. 11:25-26; 1 Sam. 10:5-6, 10-11; 19:20-24; 2 Kings 2:5)
      3. *Worship* (1 Sam. 10:5; cf. Acts 13:2).
  - b. New Testament
    - i. Prophets sometimes travelled in groups to other churches, in order to exercise their gifts together (Acts 11:27-30).
    - ii. Prophets and teachers met in Antioch for times of worship and fasting, with their spirits open to hear from God (Acts 13:1-3).
    - iii. Every church service was another opportunity to share prophetic revelation (1 Cor. 14:24-33).
- II. In order to grow prophetically, we must have a prophetic community.
  - a. We need prophetic mentors to teach us.
  - b. We need prophetic peers to challenge us.
  - c. We need an environment where prophecy is practiced.
  - d. We need a regular meeting rhythm.
- III. The *first step* in building a prophetic community is evaluating your context.
  - a. **Your role:** Are you a Senior Pastor? A church leader? A church member?
  - b. **Your church:** Is it Charismatic? Cessationist? Or somewhere on the spectrum?
  - c. **Your spouse** (if married): Are you both on the same page about prophecy?
  - d. Depending on the above answers, wise counsel, and the leading of the Spirit, you will likely pursue one of the following paths:
    - i. Change your church (at a careful pace)

- ii. Change churches
    - iii. Start an independent small group that practices prophecy
  - e. Also depending on the above answers, it is helpful to have outside consultation from a seasoned prophetic leader at various stages—especially if you intend to change your whole church.
- IV. The *second step* in building a prophetic community is establishing leadership.
  - a. Nothing moves forward without leadership.
  - b. Since this is on your heart, you will likely be the one to lead it. If not, you will closely oversee the one who does.
  - c. The role of the leader is to recruit, train, nurture, and deploy prophetic team members (cf. Eph. 4:11-13).
  - d. In its mature stages, a prophetic community needs a leader with a mature prophetic gifting. In the early stages, the gifting will likely not yet be mature. While gifting can be immature at this stage, character cannot be. The person need not be a mature prophet, but he/she must be a mature Christian.
- V. The *third step* is to establish logistics of meeting rhythm and curriculum.
  - a. The rhythm should be frequent enough to see real improvement.
  - b. A good curriculum might be reading a book together (consider, *The Beginner's Guide to Prophecy*, by Jack Deere).
- VI. If your intention is to help an entire church grow in the gifts, the *fourth step* is to spread prophetic community into the small groups.
  - a. This should not be pursued unless you have gained support of key leaders.
  - b. By this stage, it is wise to precede such a move with teaching on prophecy from the pulpit—on Sunday mornings, and perhaps, through a conference.
  - c. Small groups are the best environment for ongoing practice of the gifts.
  - d. Every small group will need one or two prophetic people to help facilitate the flow of spiritual gifts. These can come from the original prophetic community.
- VII. The *fifth step* is developing prophetic teams.
  - a. Just like fingers are all located on the hand, it can be helpful when similarly-gifted members of Christ's body minister together.
  - b. The structure of prophetic teams:
    - i. **For altar ministry:** such teams might consist of 2-3 people, with a leader, who oversees prophetic ministry at the end of a service, as people come forward to receive it.
    - ii. **For stage ministry:** such teams might consist of 1-2 people who deliver prophetic words from the stage (if one is present) during a Sunday service.
    - iii. **For traveling ministry:** as teams develop, skilled prophetic teams will be in-demand from other churches. Only the very strongest prophetic team members should prophesy in other churches.

- c. The processes of prophetic teams:
    - i. Growing prophetic teams need a funnel for continued development.
      - 1. If a prophetic gift is observed (perhaps in a small group setting), the funnel could look something like this:
      - 2. Altar team observer → altar team member → altar team leader → stage ministry → traveling team
    - ii. Growing prophetic teams need healthy feedback loops.
      - 1. Team leaders are encouraged to offer positive and constructive feedback to team members after each session.
      - 2. Accountability is encouraged:
        - a. By exchanging names between team members and recipients of prophetic ministry
        - b. By recording each prophetic word shared and sending it to recipients of prophetic ministry
  - d. Notes about public prophetic ministry (i.e. stage ministry / traveling team)
    - i. The church in Corinth was not advised to practice prophecy secretly, as if we should be embarrassed by it; in fact, Paul shares an example of a “seeker” being saved by public prophecy (1 Cor. 14:24-25).
    - ii. Just as we only allow mature teachers/musicians to minister “from the stage” on Sundays, we do not allow immature prophets to minister publicly. Sunday morning is for the mature expression of the gifts.
- VIII. The following values must be present in any gathering where prophecy is practiced:
- a. Prophecy can be trained (1 Sam. 3:1-18; Eph. 4:11-13)
  - b. Prophecies can be missed (Acts 21:4; 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:19-22)
  - c. Biblical revelation trumps prophetic revelation (Jhn. 10:35; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
  - d. Pastoral authority trumps prophetic authority (1 Tim. 5:17)
  - e. Character trumps giftedness (Matt. 7:21-23)
  - f. Growth requires risk (Matt. 10:16)
  - g. Growth requires practice more than it requires instruction (2 Tim. 1:6)
  - h. The purpose of prophecy is love (1 Cor. 12-14)