Biblical Principles Concerning Ethics and Protocols Relating to New Testament Prophetic Ministry

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The Preamble

Within the contemporary church the term “prophetic ministry” can mean a great many things. Therefore we have attempted to outline a brief description of biblically based values and practices for New Testament prophetic ministers and prophets. The following are intended primarily for those called to trans-local ministries to the church at large. However, we also acknowledge many of these principles can be applied to individuals whose prophetic work does not extend beyond their local church.

Some persons labeled as “prophets” may be more accurately categorized as “prophetic ministries.” While they may minister to the church at large, they primarily operate within the occasional “charisma” gift of prophecy. Others are called to bear the ministry of a prophet consistently as a primary calling. An established prophet will not only operate in the gift of prophecy, but will carry seasonal prophetic burdens and messages from God the Father to the wider church, and sometimes even to nations. His or her emphasis may be much more “the word of the Lord,” as opposed to “words from the Lord.” They may, at times, even give a prophetic rebuke or warning to the church, which should always be a message of grace, postured within the Father-heart of God.

Our heart in preparing and submitting these values is neither to police, nor to correct any known individuals or situations. Rather, we are simply endeavoring to articulate biblical standards that can help ensure long-term fruitfulness both for prophetic ministries and the recipients of those ministries.

Revelation 19:10 states, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Therefore, we wholeheartedly believe that the overriding theme, goal and vision of any biblically based New Testament prophetic ministry should be to make known the Person and ways of Christ Jesus. And while a prophetic ministry may often be accompanied by revelatory words, signs and wonders, healings and miracles, a true prophet will always seek to champion the Person of Christ, the gift-giver, more than the gifts.

Because God's will is for each disciple of Christ to be conformed to the image of Christ, we believe, as well, that God calls those who represent His will, voice, and ways to be living testimonies of Christ-like integrity, lived out within the context of healthy relationships that provide accountability.

The goal of our presentation is Christ-like love and service from a pure heart. We do not present these principles and protocols from an assumed posture of authority or elitism. The spirit in which we present them is two-fold; Firstly, we desire to offer this as an appeal for Christ-centered unity of purpose among current prophetic ministries. Secondly, we wholeheartedly desire to see our co-laborers bear witness to who Jesus is in every facet of ministry as they seek to prophetically serve the Body of Christ.

Biblical Principles Concerning Ethics and Protocols Relating to New Testament Prophetic Ministry

I. Concerning Beliefs and Practices

1. The Bible, as the perfect revelation of Jesus and the infallible word of God, is the absolute standard for weighing and assessing all revelation (2 Timothy 3:16; Colossians 2:18–19; John 1:14).

A. While I treasure spiritual experiences from the Holy Spirit, I will not place subjective experiences and discernment above the Bible (Revelation 19:10; Colossians 2:18–19).

B. I will not allow my emotions or pride to rob me of utilizing the Bible as my standard for weighing a revelation and any interpretation I may attach to a revelation.

C. I will always speak a Bible-centric message.

D. I will seek to draw all who hear me toward a greater relationship with the Father through Jesus, and to make the name of Jesus known in a biblical way.

2. God values His Word as the expression of His name and nature (Psalm 138:2). Therefore, we hold truth as a necessity in prophecy.

A. I will always try not only to speak truth, but to speak prophetic words in a way that reflects the loving heart of God.

B. I will determine to always lovingly speak prophetic correction in such a way as to avoid condemnation toward those who receive the prophetic word.

C. I will intend to always communicate hope for change through the transforming power of Jesus.

D. I commit to reflect the nature of my God by loving people more than my gift.

E. Prophecy is a word from God. I will try to speak it with both humility and confidence.

F. While fearing God, I will not fear man. Whenever God directs me to release revelation I will not hold back through fear of man, fear of offending those with whom I am in relationship, or fear of losing popularity and/or opportunities to minister (Galatians 1:10; Proverbs 29:5).

G. I commit to God's call on my life to proclaim the ways and will of God ahead of the “success” of my ministry in the eyes of man or the church.

3. I believe that prophetic accuracy is essential. I believe that the method and manner of delivery (the heart) of a prophecy is also important.

A. I understand that voicing words from God is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. I aspire to have 100% accuracy in all I say.

B. I will admit when I am wrong and take steps to acknowledge, repent and make restitution for my error in a prophecy or its delivery, in a manner appropriate to correct the error and the reason for the error.

C. Repentance and restitution must also be appropriate to my sphere of influence and the scope of the prophetic word (Psalm 138:2).

4. If I do give an errant prophecy, I commit to full repentance. This will include:

A. An apology. If I gave the prophecy to a private party, my apology must be to that party. If the prophecy was given to a group such as a church or the public, the apology must be given to that group.

B. Biblical repentance does not mean saying, “I'm sorry” only to God, but also to those I have hurt. Most importantly, I must communicate that I am deeply concerned about the harm I have done or the hurt I have inflicted, and I will do whatever else is needed to help heal the wounds I have caused.

C. With the help of wise counsel, I will seek to find if there is anything in my heart that caused this error, and deal with it through confession, repentance and action.

D. I commit to continuing in accountability to a safe and loving authority whom I believe will support me and help me walk in integrity. I will not

remove myself from this process even if painful to me and/or it seems that those to whom I am accountable are not treating me fairly.

E. I believe there are consequences to all actions. If my error is particularly serious or repeated, I will be willing to take time off from prophetic ministry until I and those in authority over me have discerned that I am ready to resume ministry.

5. Concerning supernatural manifestations, I will not substitute the seeking of angels, angelic activity, or other supernatural manifestations, over the seeking of God, His presence, and the truths contained in Scripture. The source of all truth is the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 11:14; Colossians 2:18–19).

A. I believe that the character of Christ in me is more important to the Kingdom than my gift. It is the application and manifestation of God's Word in my life.

B. I will not fall prey to idolatry by seeking to generate, initiate or exaggerate supernatural manifestations, no matter what may be expected by the church culture in which I speak.

C. Likewise, I endeavor to allow the Holy Spirit to initiate how and when He releases supernatural manifestations and/or ministry through me.

D. If God does speak to me through angels, or causes certain manifestations, or gives particular types of revelation, I will communicate what I hear and see only as God directs. I will do so without elevating myself, my experience or revelation in any way that might detract from the Person of God Himself.

6. Understanding a prophetic word is vital to its implementation. Therefore, I commit to being open to discuss, with appropriate leaders within the Body of Christ, the prophetic words I receive and interpretations of those words. I will endeavor to do so because prophetic gifts are given to serve the people, not to promote the one who prophesies.

7. Words from God should encourage, train and equip the Body of Christ to conform to the image of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–16). I will endeavor to always help the Body of Christ perceive the Person of Christ more clearly and to hunger for Him and His ways (Colossians 1:8–10; Ephesians 1:17–18).

8. Ephesians 4 ministries are to equip the Body of Christ to receive, develop and mature, rather than to cultivate an audience of spectators for our gifting. Thus, we hold in high regard the priesthood of each believer in Christ (1 Peter 2:5; Romans 8:14; Isaiah 61:6).

A. I commit to preaching sound doctrine rather than dividing the Body of Christ through non-scriptural doctrines designed to amaze my audience and develop a following (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

B. I will not use the gift God has given me in a reckless manner that might cause others to stumble or misunderstand God and His ways (Jeremiah 23:32).

C. I commit to help Christian leaders and trainers discern between the operation of God-given spiritual gifts and human psychic abilities (Daniel 2:27–28; 4:8–9).

D. I commit to help train the Body of Christ to discern between true, Holy Spirit-inspired revelation and mere human intuition, New Age pseudo-spirituality or psychic abilities (1 John 4:1).

E. I will intentionally try to communicate revelation and the interpretation of revelation in ways that encourage, strengthen, and comfort the recipient(s) of the word (1 Corinthians 14:3).

F. I will seek to avoid prophesying anything that controls or manipulates the lives of others.

G. When giving a prophetic word, I will seek to always encourage hearers to biblically and prayerfully weigh it rather than to take it without consideration (1 Corinthians 14:29).

9. I commit to help train the Body of Christ to discern between genuine encounters with God and other pseudo-spiritual experiences, as well as to help the Body of Christ understand the various degrees of revelation and their relative levels of importance.

10. I commit to refusing to prostitute the revelatory gifting God has given me by attaching a fee to a prophetic word* (Micah 3:11).

A. I will not use a prophetic word or prophetic ministry to manipulate people to give financially to me, and or the ministry I lead (2 Peter 2:15).

B. I will not lead people to believe that the prophetic word will be triggered or influenced by a gift.

**Accepting honorariums, gifts or travel remuneration is acceptable. This is different than prophesying for an agreed amount of money, and is equivalent to a pastor receiving a salary.*

II. Concerning My Life in Representing Christ Jesus Prophetically

1. I commit to living, modeling and championing the character of Christ. I believe Christ-like character to be more important than operating out of gifting (2 Corinthians 7:1).

A. I choose to consistently promote and model the ways of Christ more than simply communicate revelation.

B. When it comes to representing Christ Jesus, I believe that I not only have a message, but that I am the message.

2. I believe that wisdom from above is "reasonable and peaceable." I will place high value on Christ-like humility, and shun prophetic arrogance (James 3:17).

3. I commit to having an accountability group in place to whom I will hold my lifestyle, marriage and ministry accountable.

A. I commit to living a life free of substance abuse, love of money, extra-marital sex, pornography, pride and unforgiveness/bitterness.

B. I commit to living out God's high value of love and covenant emotionally, spiritually and physically with the "spouse of my youth," to the best of my ability.

C. I will guard my heart and make a covenant with my eyes not to look upon another in a lustful manner.

4. I commit to being free from both the love of money and the love of appearing successful in the eyes of man. I commit to choosing venues to host my ministry, based on the leading of the Holy Spirit as opposed to the size of the crowd or financial remuneration.

5. I commit to being not only a person of prayer and worship but a continual student of the Bible and the ways of God.

6. I commit to honor the Lord by honoring and strengthening His delegated authority in the Body of Christ.

A. I will honor and strengthen local pastors and church leaders as God's-appointed shepherds and gatekeepers for their local congregations.

B. I will not usurp the authority of the local leadership in the Body where I am called to speak.

7. I commit to perceiving myself as a servant to both the church at large and the local church as God gives me opportunity.

A. I will not view congregations and other ministries as mere platforms, or tools to facilitate my vision and calling.

B. I will not steal another leader's people or leadership in order to build my ministry.

8. I commit to financial, ethical and moral purity, and will not use the Body of Christ to advance my ministry nor build my own empire. My endeavor is to imitate Jesus' example of servanthood, and only do as I see the Father doing.

III. The Nature of Authentic Prophetic Ministry

- Bible-centric–bear/bare witness, expose, declare and establish the truth of Scripture.
- Salvation-centric–declare, teach and demonstrate the gospel of the Kingdom of God with signs and wonders following (Mark 16:20).
- Jesus-centric–edify, comfort, encourage and exhort believers and the church in the way to Jesus as well as the way of Jesus.
- God-centric–demonstrate in word, deed and manner the character of the Father: love, righteousness, justice, compassion, mercy, majesty and holiness.
- Sovereignty-centric–bring glory to God alone. His name, His acts, and His glory are inseparable. He exercises His will through His omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability and eternality, as He chooses.