



Dear friend

God intends us to be a people who follow the cloud not follow the crowd. I want to ensure genuine prophetic ministry has access to me and the churches I work with. I wonder how anyone leads in a local church without prophetic input. How can we, as a local church, possibly know what God wants us to put our energies into and which direction to go in?

Acts 21:10-11 *after we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'*

Acts 11:28 *One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)*

These occasions in Acts show God using prophetic ministry to shape and prepare individuals and churches for what he intended to do in and through them. The response to prophecy was to shape, direct and prepare in line with what God had said.

- Agabus was known as a Prophet. This is presumably as his life showed godly character, his ministry was proved to be genuine over a period of time and his doctrine commended him as one approved of God.
- The Prophetic worked in team. Agabus came to Jerusalem with a team of prophets. He was in Caesarea with Phillip who had four daughters with prophetic ministry. Here was not a man who was aloof and isolated- Agabus ministered in corporate contexts.
- Room was made for the prophetic in local church life. When 'they came down' to Jerusalem it was not viewed by the leaders of the church as a side- show but rather as a significant moment of directional input for the church.

- They adjusted plans, ministries and programs in response to what God had said. The entire 'ministry to the poor' agenda in the Jerusalem church was fashioned and shaped by the prophetic. With so much need around us in our communities how do we know where to target our energies unless God shows us?

John in Revelation said, 'He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches' each message to the local churches was different. They all had differing strengths and weaknesses. God said specific things to each church. Indeed every genuine planting of the Lord has a unique fingerprint of God upon it. Our role as leaders is to find out and express what Jesus desires for the local church we are part of.

In our leadership team and church we make room for prophetic ministry to come in shaping programs and individual ministries. We seek to weigh and discern God's voice then once we feel we have heard the heart of God we implement it practically:

- Prayer meeting agendas are shaped by the prophetic.
- Leadership goals and objectives are shaped according to the prophetic. For example if God has spoken about us having a new building we need to go and look for one.
- Staff and budgets are apportioned in line with the things God has said
- We cast vision in the church to ensure everyone continues to serve the same vision.

We feedback to prophetic ministry to both encourage and to keep our ears open to fresh instruction from God.

When apostles and prophets work together the most powerful and strategically vibrant leadership combination is possible. Prophets to show the way and Apostles to build like wise master builders. In reading the New Testament it seems that is how God intends the local church to function.

Genuine prophecies should not get filed under 'P' in someone's filing cabinet. They are living working documents to build to.

Mike Betts

Senior Pastor, Lowestoft Community Church

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