



## Helping Prophets Relate to Their Community

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June 29, 2018—Vol. 12, No. 26

Throughout this year we're walking through a significant aspect of ministry and leadership in the Church. Often referred to as the Five-Fold Ministry, or APEST, it's the description of roles given by God to equip and build up the Church for its mission which is found in Ephesians 4. This month and next, we'll look specifically at prophets.



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You can read the initial article about apostles, [Prophets: Tuned Into God, in The Church Advocate here](#).

In the latest issue of the *The Church Advocate*, we took time to explore the second vocation of the Five-Fold Ministry – the prophet. The prophet is one who is especially tuned into the voice and the heart of God. They are like moral compasses that know the right thing and the right way. Prophets are oriented towards social justice, worship, and calling God's people back to Him.

All prophets, as well as the other Five-Fold Ministries, are on a journey from immaturity to maturity. While they have natural giftings, talents, and callings that are specific to being prophetic, they too, like all Christians, must work through the process of sanctification and align their thoughts, behaviors, and lives with the will of God.

So whether you are a prophet or you lead prophets, here are three key signs of immaturity and how to overcome them:

1. **An Attitude of Critique.** With a natural inclination towards doing things the right way and being moral compasses, prophets can have an attitude of critique. Every problem and every issue gets identified and voiced as being wrong. Through a maturing process, prophets need to grow in how they express their critique and what they critique. First, they need to discern whether it's their opinion or God's heart that's leading to the critique. If prophets don't spend time with the Lord listening into every situation, they can easily promote their personal agenda as God's. Second, prophets need to discern what God's priority is in this season. Just because there are multiple things to critique, doesn't mean all of them need to be addressed now. What's the one thing the Lord is calling the prophet to highlight? Third, prophets should express their concerns through the

lens of 1 Corinthians 14:3; are they sharing in a way that builds up, encourages, and comforts? Is the prophet revealing the heart of Jesus as they raise points of concern?

2. **A Posture of Control.** As prophets bring words from the Lord to individuals or communities, they can see themselves not only as messengers but as enforcers. This happens when they don't just hand the word over, but instead, forcefully insist that the word must be correct and accepted, even to the extent of nagging, persisting, or harmful actions. It's helpful to remember that the Church operates within the New Testament framework, where the Holy Spirit indwells within all Christians and, therefore, every Christian can hear from the Lord for themselves. This means we all have the ability and responsibility to weigh and discern prophetic words that are given to us (1 Corinthians 14:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, 1 John 4:1). It's then our responsibility to act on them. The prophet's responsibility is to be the messenger and to help those receiving to process, discern, and weigh whether it's from the Lord or not.
3. **A Life of Isolation.** When prophets exhibit an attitude of critique and a posture of control it will often lead to rejection. Individuals, leaders, and communities will reject with that prophet has shared and maybe even reject the prophet himself. While there is the responsibility at the end of those receiving to treat prophets kindly and help them in their journey, prophets tend to react to rejection with rebellion and isolation. This places them far from the center of the church community and prevents them from building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4), finding counsel and discipleship, as well as receiving correction. Prophets and the entire body of Christ need to operate with love, grace, and humility to encourage and form a community that can best extend the Kingdom of God.

How can you help walk with the prophets in your life to see them grow into maturity? If you are a prophet, what's the particular area of challenge for you and how might you step forward to overcome it?