



PROPHETIC STANDARDS

STATEMENT

— APRIL 29, 2021 —

At a time when there are many questions in the Body concerning the gift of prophecy and the ministry of the prophet, and in light of the needs of local pastors as well as individual believers to have practical guidelines for processing prophetic words, as Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders, we felt that now was the opportune moment to produce this current document.

It is not the purpose of this statement to condemn or accuse. Instead, our purpose is to help provide scriptural guidelines for the operation of the gift of prophecy and the functioning of the ministry of the prophet, while at the same time affirming the importance of these gifts and ministries.

WE BELIEVE that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the gift of prophecy and the ministry of the prophet, are essential for the edification of the Body of Christ and the work of the ministry, which is why Scripture exhorts us to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that we may prophesy (*see 1 Cor. 14:1, 39*). Prophetic ministry is of great importance to the Church and must be encouraged, welcomed, and nurtured.

WE BELIEVE it is essential to create an environment in which prophecy can flourish, side by side with the other gifts of the Spirit and together with apostolic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching ministries. To create this environment, we need to encourage freedom in the Spirit in a faith-filled atmosphere, making room for spontaneous utterances as the Spirit wills. But all this must be done with proper accountability and oversight.

WE BELIEVE that the general function of the gift of prophecy, as it relates to the church, has to do with edification, exhortation, and comfort (*see 1 Cor. 14:3*). As this gift relates to unbelievers, it can reveal the secrets of their hearts and bring them to repentance, demonstrating God's reality to them (*see 1 Cor. 14:24-25*).

WE BELIEVE that the essence of the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, hence the ultimate goal of prophetic ministry is to exalt the lordship of Jesus Christ, even though we recognize that not every prophetic word will specifically point to Him (*see Rev. 19:10; 1 Cor. 12:3*).

WE BELIEVE in the five-fold ministry of the prophet, recognizing that such prophets will also be used to bring correction, instruction, and directional clarity to the Body, but not independent of other leaders, and therefore different from the model of the independent Old Testament prophet.

WE RECOGNIZE that prophets do not serve as spiritual fortune tellers or prognosticators, nor is their role to satisfy our curiosity about the future or reveal abstract information. God's purpose in prophecy is redemptive, calling for repentance, giving supernatural guidance, bringing comfort, deliverance, restoration, and glorifying Jesus as Lord.

WE RECOGNIZE that, due to the nature of prophetic ministry, some prophetic words can be submitted for evaluation before they are delivered while other words will be evaluated after they are delivered. But in all situations, those claiming to speak for God should welcome the godly evaluation of their prophecies.

WE BELIEVE that prophecies should first be tested by the Word, then if the prophetic word is not contrary to the Scriptures, it should be evaluated by other mature leaders. If a prophecy is given in the context of a local church, then mature leaders in that setting should evaluate it. If a prophecy is given in the context of a region or nation, then mature regional or national leaders should be invited to evaluate the word (*see 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thes. 5:19-21*). Those who refuse to have their words tested should not be given a platform.

WE RECOGNIZE that prophets receive supernatural revelation from God, but they are also dependent on other five-fold ministry leaders for the interpretation and application of the revelations they receive. It is the Lord's will that all these various ministry gifts, including the ministry of the prophet, work in harmony rather than independently. Only then will the Body come into full health and maturity.

WE RECOGNIZE the unique challenges posed by the internet and social media, as anyone claiming to be a prophet can release a word to the general public without any accountability or even responsibility. While it is not possible to stop the flood of such words online, we urge all believers to check the lives and fruit of those they follow online and also see if they are part of a local church body and have true accountability for their public ministries and personal lives. We also urge prophetic ministers posting unfiltered and untested words purportedly from the Lord to first submit those words to peer leaders for evaluation.

WE AGREE that Scripture instructs us not to despise prophecies but to examine prophetic utterances carefully and to hold fast to that which is good (*1 Thes. 5:19-21*). This also means that we should cultivate honor and respect for true prophetic ministries rather than an attitude of skepticism or scorn.

WE BELIEVE that all spiritual leaders, including those serving as prophetic ministers, should be vetted and qualified by their respective churches, networks, or movements based on the standards of leadership set forth by Paul the apostle as found in *1 Timothy 3:1-8; Titus 1:5-9*.

WE BELIEVE that all spiritual leaders, including five-fold ministry prophets, should be above reproach and should live a life worthy of their calling (*see Eph. 4:1-3*). Consequently, we believe that prophetic leaders whose lives violate the moral and ethical standards of the Word disqualify themselves from the ministry irrespective of how much influence or anointing they have.

WE ALSO AGREE that the greatest requirement for all leaders in the church, including prophetic leaders, is to endeavor to reflect the character of Christ and to utilize their gifts out of love for God, His people, and the lost (*1 Cor. 13:2; Rom. 8:29*).

WE VALUE humility, integrity, and accuracy in prophetic ministry in order to protect the faith and trust of those who hear a word that is stated to be from God. It is a sacred thing to claim to speak for the Lord and, in keeping with the words of Jesus, to whom much is given, much is required (*see Luke 12:48*). And just as those who teach are held to a higher standard of accountability (*see Jam. 3:1*), so also those who prophesy should be held to a higher standard. They can have a powerful influence over people's lives for better or worse, because of which we urge sobriety and circumspection together with faith and boldness.

WE UNDERSTAND that prophecies can be conditional and that many prophecies will take time to come to pass. We also recognize that prophetic language is often mysterious and symbolic, requiring interpretation and insight. This means that prophecies that do not contradict the Bible or that are not contrary to fact should be evaluated over time and not immediately rejected.

On the other hand, if a prophetic word is delivered containing specific details and dates in which the stated prophetic word will come to pass and that prophecy contains no conditions to be met in order to be fulfilled, and that word does not come to pass as prophesied, then the one who delivered the word must be willing to take full responsibility, demonstrating genuine contrition before God and people.

Any statement of apology and/or explanation/clarification should be delivered to the audience to whom the erroneous word was given. For example, if it was given to an individual, the apology (and/or explanation/clarification) should be delivered to the individual. If the word was delivered publicly, then a public apology (and/or explanation/clarification) should be presented. This is not meant to be a punishment but rather a mature act of love to protect the honor of the Lord, the integrity of prophetic ministry, and the faith of those to whom the word was given.

WE BELIEVE it is essential that all spiritual leaders, including prophetic leaders, have a presbytery of peers and seasoned spiritual leaders who can hold them accountable regarding their life and ministry. In keeping with this, we reject the notion that to judge a prophet's words is a violation of *Psalm 105:15* (where God exhorted the ancient nations not to touch the patriarchs or harm His prophets). Prophets who err must be willing to receive correction from peer leaders with whom they are in accountable relationship. Those refusing such accountability should not be welcomed for ministry.

WE RECOGNIZE that true prophetic words can be faith-building and can sometimes call for a faith-filled response, but we reject the idea that prophets can use Old Testament texts about believing the prophets in order to gain blanket support for their words, as if everything a prophet utters today must be believed. To the contrary, we can only believe the prophetic word if it is not contrary to Scripture, it is not factually in error, and our own spirits bear witness with it. Only then can we add our faith to that word coming to pass (*see 1 Tim. 1:18*).

Those wanting to use Old Testament prophetic texts to exercise influence or authority over their followers should remember that inaccurate prophecy under that same Old Testament standard was punishable by death. New Testament prophets, along with other New Testament ministry leaders, do not lord it over their people or demand submission and faith. Instead, in humility, they serve the flock (*see 1 Pet. 5:1-4*).

WE REJECT any threatening words from prophets today, warning their followers that judgment will fall on them if they fail to obey the prophet's words. We see this as a dangerous form of spiritual manipulation.

WE REJECT the spiritual manipulation of the prophetic gift for the personal benefit of the prophet or of his or her ministry, whether to garner favor, power, or financial gain. And under no circumstances can a prophet charge money to deliver a prophetic word. This is spiritual abuse of the worst kind and is detestable in God's sight.

WE REJECT the notion that a contemporary prophetic word is on the same level of inspiration or authority as Scripture or that God's inerrant speech is always communicated perfectly by prophets today, since the Bible says we only know in part and prophesy in part (*1 Cor. 13:9*). It is the written Word alone that can lay claim to being "the Word of God" (*2 Tim. 3:16*); prophecies, at best, are "a word from the Lord," to be tested by the Word of God.

Finally, while we believe in holding prophets accountable for their words, in accordance with the Scriptures, we do not believe that a sincere prophet who delivers an inaccurate message is therefore a false prophet. Instead, as Jesus explained, and as the Old Testament emphasized, false prophets are wolves in sheep's clothing, in contrast to true believers who might speak inaccurately (*see Matt. 7:15-20; Jer. 23:9-40; Ezek. 13:23*). Thus a false prophet is someone who operates under a false spirit masquerading as the Holy Spirit.

WE THEREFORE RECOGNIZE distinctions between a believer who gives an inaccurate prophecy (in which case they should acknowledge their error), a believer who consistently prophesies inaccurately (in which case we recognize that this person is not a prophet and we urge them to stop prophesying), and a false prophet (whom we recognize as a false believer, a lost soul, calling them to repent and be saved).

Because God's gifts and calling are irrevocable (*see Rom. 11:29*), we understand that a person who has been prophetically gifted might be able to function in that gifting even though they are no longer in right relationship with God. That is why it is imperative that we judge a prophet by the fruit of their life and ministry rather than by their gift, also recognizing that there are some who started right but will be rejected in the end (*see Matt. 7:21-23*).

