



Speak Prophetically

*Faith & Flourishing in Politics:
Christian Education hour*

Rev. Jonathan M. Romig - Fall 2021

Our Garden Hedge:

1. **Listen Well** - We don't have all the answers so let's ask what others think, really try to hear each other out, and let others finish their thoughts.
2. **Speak with Brevity & Focus** - Let's leave space for others to participate and stay on track ("Keep to our hedge").
3. **Practice Gentle Courage** - Let's be bold and share our thoughts and ideas, point to what we believe the Scripture and wisdom says, and yet do so with a gentle and humble spirit.
4. **Keep Praying** - Let's pray for the Holy Spirit to be present and to bear fruit through our discussion.





What does it
mean to speak
prophetically
and why do it?



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Old Testament: Sometimes “future-telling.”

Deuteronomy 18:20, 22 (ESV)

20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’ [...] 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

Most often “truth-telling.”

- See **Deuteronomy 28** blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (Sinai covenant lawyers).

Deuteronomy 28:15 (ESV)

“But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

The prophets warned against idolatry, immorality, and injustice.

Amos 2:6b-7 (ESV)

“For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—
those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth
and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
a man and his father go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned; (c.f., Amos 4:1-5, 5:21-24)



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

The prophets highlighted mistreating the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners.

Zechariah 7:9-10 (ESV)

9 “Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, 10 do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” (c.f., Jeremiah 22)

Jeremiah is thrown in a pit not just because he tells the people to stop worshiping idols but because the false prophets want to continue telling God's people that they can keep accumulating wealth and exploiting the vulnerable without consequences. They can mistreat the foreigner, the widow, and the orphan, and as long as they come to the temple and do their religious duties every once in a while, they will be fine. They are safe.

Kaitlyn Schiess, *The Liturgy of Politics: Spiritual Formation for the Sake of our Neighbor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020) 49-50, Kindle.

Those most in jeopardy during Washington's debates and decisions are precisely the people the Bible clearly instructs us to protect and care for—the poorest and most vulnerable. In comparison to the power players of the political system, they have virtually no one lobbying on their behalf in these hugely important discussions about how public resources will be allocated.

Jim Wallis, *The (Un)Common Good: How the Gospel Brings Hope to a World Divided* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014) 79, Kindle.



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

New Testament: Ministry/gifting

2 Timothy 4:2-4 (ESV)

preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (c.f., Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29)

Prophetic preaching should never separate proclamation and practice. Jesus is the perfect expression of what the gospel is and what the gospel does.

Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018) 120, Kindle.



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

- Paul preached against idols in Athens, which supported their social and economic systems (Acts 17:16-34).
- When Paul challenged Ephesus' idolatry with the gospel, he also threatened their banking system and monetary security, and it sparked a riot (Acts 19:1-41).
- When the church preaches the gospel and speaks against idolatry today, it will often critique our nation's financial systems and social structures.

The prophetic power of the gospel and the church will grow as we disciple one another toward being a just and righteous people. So teach biblical principles. But don't wade into public policy tactics and then bind the conscience.

The church's most powerful political (and we could add prophetic) word is in proclaiming the gospel.

Jonathan Leeman, *How The Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2020) 153, Kindle.

Russell Moore says the church is no longer a “moral majority” but rather “we should see ourselves as a *prophetic minority*.”

Russell D. Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015) chap. 2, Kindle. *Emphasis his.*



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

Sermon Propositions

- To speak prophetically is to speak truth to power with power (empowered by God's Word & Holy Spirit).
- We speak prophetically out of love for our neighbor.
- Prophetic power comes at the cost of self-sacrificial love (Jesus flipping tables).
- Examples: Mother Teresa & MLK

Do you agree? Disagree? How would you put it?



What does it mean to speak prophetically and why do it?

Amos 7:12-13 (ESV)

And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, 13 but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

Civil religion — Religion/state enmesh, which leads to a watered-down faith and injustices.

Do you agree? Disagree? How would you reframe?

As a witness to the coming kingdom of God, there is no government system, leader, economic program, or justice system that the church can support without reservation. We know that perfection awaits us. While we must support the best available options, making judgments about what systems and legislative options look most like the redemption we know we are awaiting, the church must also be constantly prepared to call out the abuses of even the systems it judges to be the best available options.

Kaitlyn Schiess, *The Liturgy of Politics: Spiritual Formation for the Sake of our Neighbor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020) 187, Kindle.



What is unique about “faithful prophetic presence?” What does it look like today?

Faithful prophetic presence will entail some seeking placement within influential institutions in order to slowly subvert those institutions, thus setting the stage for long-term change. We might call these the “court prophets.” They seek to be wise compromisers within the current cultural systems and institutions. They are salt in the midst of the world, looking to subtly enhance and improve the culture in Godward directions.

Vermon Pierre, “Faithful Presence Needs Prophets,” in *Revisiting ‘Faithful Presence’: To Change the World Five Years Later*, ed. Collin Hansen (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2015), chap. “Faithful Presence Needs [. . .],” Kindle.



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Potential examples of “court prophets” in the Bible:

- Samuel with King Saul
- Nathan with King David
- Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego with King Nebuchadnezzar
- Esther with King Xerxes
- Nehemiah with King Artaxerxes

The things that actually separate us already have been and remain the big controversies in our culture: What is the proper place for sex in a relationship? What is marriage? When does life begin? These fundamental debates are not easily resolved by a focus on the common good.

Hunter Baker, “Can Christians Change the World after Obergefell?” in *Revisiting ‘Faithful Presence’: To Change the World Five Years Later*, ed. Collin Hansen (Deerfield, IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2015), chap. “Can Christians Change [...],” Kindle.



What role does wisdom and the Holy Spirit play in speaking prophetically?



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Proverbs 23:23 (ESV)

Buy truth, and do not sell it;

buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

If we are to regain our prophetic voice, we must have a solid foundation of biblical knowledge and be open to the Spirit's leading in how to apply the balm of God's Word to the issues of our day.

Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018) 122-123, Kindle.

Prophetic preaching is the bridge between the solid doctrine of conservative Christianity and the Christian ethics of the liberal perspective. Without it, we can easily remain in our own camp, content to cast aspersions and judgments on those on the other side. We desperately need those voices crying in the wilderness making way for His kingdom purposes on earth.

Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018) 116-117, Kindle.



What behavior
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What behavior should we model when we speak prophetically?

James 1:19-20 (ESV)

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

The problem with carnal anger and outrage is that it's one of the easiest sins to commit while convincing oneself that one is being faithful. [...] Rage is no sign of authority, prophetic or otherwise.

Russell D. Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015) chap. 2, Kindle. Emphasis his.

We need to find a way of combining a civil outlook with a “passionate intensity” about our convictions. The real challenge is to come up with a convicted civility.

Convicted Christians have often entered the public square as prophets. We want to tell people what God expects of them. And that is a legitimate role. God does expect us to represent the divine concern for righteousness and justice in public life. But the priestly role is also crucial. Indeed, it is usually a necessary preparation for exercising the prophetic role. Until people have been sure that we have heard and understood their concerns, they probably will not listen to our prophetic messages.

Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010) 14, 125-126, Kindle.



Let's pray for 1) the Holy Spirit to show us when to speak prophetically; and 2) to be marked by "convicted civility;" and 3) to practice "faithful prophetic presence" wherever God leads us.

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