

School

OF THE

PROPHETS

Advanced Training for Prophetic Ministry

KRIS VALLOTTON



Chosen

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

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I dedicate this book to the prophets and prophetesses who went before us and paved the way for our success with their extreme sacrifice under much religious persecution. I especially want to thank Larry Randolph, who has been a great role model to me, particularly in the early years of my prophetic development. I also want to thank Bob Jones. Bob was a father to me and helped me through the worst season of my entire life. I am eternally indebted to him. Bob Jones has recently gone on to be with the Lord, and I miss him so much.

I also want to dedicate this book to Bill Johnson, who taught me how to value the prophetic ministry. Bill has been my leader for nearly four decades and has always been patient with me as I struggled through countless mistakes to grow in my prophetic call.

And finally, I want to dedicate this book to Kathy, who is the woman of my dreams. She encouraged me when I wanted to quit, stood by me when life was painful and has been my best friend and lover since she was twelve years old. She is the most loyal and noble person I have ever known, and without her I would have nothing to say.

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FOREWORD

About thirty years ago, I was privileged to spend some time with one of the greatest heroes of my life. He was probably forty years my senior and had experienced things in God I had only dreamed of. I still pass along some of the stories I heard that day. Our conversation ranged from revival, to the move of the Spirit in a meeting, to miracles, and many similar topics. His answers were the most insightful I had ever heard. My life has been forever changed.

When I asked him about prophets and the prophetic—as that had captured my attention in recent years—he gave me priceless insights and counsel through his experiences in that area. But his bottom-line counsel for me was to leave it alone, as it would only bring division to the church.

His counsel was pastoral in nature and important for me to hear. He had witnessed a movement in which marriages were prophesied into existence, only to fail. Others were sent overseas by a prophetic word as missionaries when God had never called them. Disappointment and bewilderment were

the results. Such horror stories seemed to be endless, as he obviously still bore the sting of the prophetic gone wrong.

While it may seem like a contradiction, his counsel encouraged me to pursue the very thing he warned me against, but to do so with unusual emphasis on wisdom.

I already had good relationships with several legitimate prophets who were lovers of the church and submitted their gift to the scrutiny of others. The fruit of their ministries was unmistakable. I have personally received ministry countless times from these gifted people, always with supernatural fruit. Besides, my friend's warning only emphasized to me that the devil is a counterfeiter.

Have you noticed that counterfeiters never counterfeit pennies? It is not worth the effort. They counterfeit larger bills because of their value. In the same way, whatever the devil tries to destroy, counterfeit or dilute only reveals what he fears the most. That means the prophetic done right frightens the powers of darkness—and is, therefore, tremendously necessary.

And so the journey began. We experimented in small groups, where it was easy to clean up our messes, when we made them. We also kept it among the people we knew the best so they would keep us accountable. We basically made an agreement that because this was dangerous, staying humble and accountable was the only way we could pursue something of such danger—and value.

During that season Kris Vallotton began to emerge. His gift was clear and strong yet unrefined. No one, in any gift, starts refined. To reject someone because he does not use a gift with maturity only reveals the immaturity of the mentor. We had to make room for all of us to learn. And learn we did.

Fast forward 30-plus years: It is one of my greatest honors to present to you my friend and ministry partner for the past

35 years, a true prophet of God, Kris Vallotton. Kris has learned how to communicate what the Lord is saying, not from a place of shame or condemnation but from a place of hope, life and encouragement. The focus of his ministry is on what God is doing—which often contrasts with the bent of many prophets who see mainly what is wrong with the world or the Church.

This book is the result of decades of personal training and learning. I consider it to be a priceless treasure of lessons learned, some the hard way, but learned for sure.

I have had the privilege to know and share life with many true prophets of God through the years. They are gifts to the church and treasures to me personally. Yet I have never met anyone who carries such a strong grace to train others in the ministry of being a prophet or in operating in the gift of prophecy as Kris does. His training is clear, risky, powerful and extremely fruitful.

This book reveals the very life and heart of the Father, looking to equip and lead others into their place of contribution to His purposes on the earth, giving hope to the Church “for such a time as this.”

I watched this book being written on the tablet of Kris’s heart long before it ever reached this printing. And so you hold in your hands a book that will forever leave a mark on the way you approach your gift, whether you are a prophet or even if you have never prophesied. This book is useful for every person with any spiritual gift.

Bill Johnson, senior leader, Bethel Church,
Redding, California; author, *When Heaven Invades Earth*,
Experience the Impossible and more; co-author,
The Essential Guide to Healing and Healing Unplugged

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INTRODUCTION

Navigating White Water

When I was fifteen years old, my mother was sick with psoriasis that covered most of her body. To make matters worse, for nearly a year we had a prowler trying to break into our home, prompting both of us to sleep with a gun by our side at night. The police were staking out our house nearly every night to try to catch the perpetrator. The guy actually got into my bedroom one night. . . . I woke up just in time to see him coming through my window. Half asleep, I pulled out my gun and took a shot at him as he leaped out the window. These were trying times for my family, and as the oldest of three children, I felt as if the weight of the world were on my shoulders.

In the midst of all this chaos, in the wee hours of the morning, lying in my bed, I said out loud, “If there is a God and if You will heal my mother, I will find out who You are and serve You the rest of my life!”

A moment later, an audible voice said, “My name is Jesus Christ, and you have what you requested!”

I always had a sense that there was a God, but I did not know who He was. Nor had I ever had any kind of supernatural experience prior to this. Yet the next morning my mother was completely well, healed of the psoriasis, and within a few more days, the police apprehended the prowler. Needless to say, our life became substantially more peaceful.

About a week passed, and the voice returned again in the middle of the night, saying, “My name is Jesus Christ. You said that if I healed your mother, you would serve Me, and I am waiting!”

For three long years, I searched for Him by going from church to church, looking for the God who had spoken to me. I am not saying that God was not present in those churches, but for whatever reason, I simply did not connect with Him there. Finally, when I was eighteen, my desperate journey came to an end in a house filled with hippies. That night, I gave my heart to Jesus and began to keep my promise to follow Him the rest of my life. It would be years before I would realize that I was part of the Jesus People movement. I was not a hippie or a drug addict. In fact, the truth is that I had never drunk alcohol in my life, and the only person I have ever had sex with is my wife. Yet I connected with the Jesus People so well because I shared their passion for God and their intense curiosity regarding signs and wonders. After all, my entrance into the Kingdom came through an audible invitation.

The Challenging Years

It was not long before my spiritual journey introduced me to two other streams: the charismatic Catholics and the Protestant Pentecostals. The Jesus People, charismatics and

Pentecostals all believed in a supernatural God who still speaks to His people today. But the homogenization of these three cultures was at times confusing, and at times even divisive. Most of the Jesus People had very little theology behind anything they did. Like me, they came into the Kingdom through some kind of supernatural encounter, which often happened outside the Church. Their paradigm for God was therefore nearly 100 percent experience oriented. Their prophecies were free-flowing, boundaryless and often unbiblical. But they had good hearts, and they wanted desperately to please God. The Jesus People also had been taught a very negative eschatology. This created a rapture mentality and a pretty intense fear of the devil, the Beast and his mark. This often filtered into their prophecies, which were filled with words about Jesus returning at any moment.

The charismatic Catholics often had some theological foundation, but it was usually based more on tradition than on the Bible itself. The Catholics' end time perspective has always been positive, so their prophetic words were not usually filled with rapture fantasies and/or mark of the Beast references. But they were obsessed with the Holy Spirit and spoke of Him in the first person, as if He were a friend sitting next to them. They believed that He had given them gifts to use whenever they wanted. Their prophetic style was not quite as free-flowing as the Jesus People, but their prophetic delivery was also very casual and not usually very dramatic.

On the other hand, the Pentecostals were a completely different bunch. They prophesied only when the "Holy Ghost" anointed them to speak. If they did not speak at the moment He "anointed" them, they felt that they had quenched the Spirit. They had deep theological convictions about the moving of the Holy Ghost that were often based on a mixture of the Old Testament prophets, with some New Testament

Scriptures added in for flavor. They almost always spoke in tongues before they prophesied, and their prophecies usually began with, “Thus saith the Lord.” Of course, they only read the King James Version of the Bible, so almost every prophecy sounded like a line from a Shakespearean play, with nearly as much drama.

These three streams often flowed into one pool at conferences and special gatherings. As you can imagine, the meetings were not always harmonious. Then, a few years after I began following Jesus, Kathy and I met Bill Johnson and he became our leader, as he still is to this day. Bill and his wife, Beni, serve as the senior leaders of Bethel Church in Redding, California. Bill has always had an interesting perspective on the prophetic ministry. First of all, he is a fifth-generation Pentecostal leader whose father was a district supervisor in the Assemblies of God. Bill’s father, Earl, also pastored Bethel Church during the Jesus People movement, and he loved the charismatic Catholics. He even had charismatic Catholic priests speak to his congregation.

Bill’s church and family background not only gave him a diverse perspective on God’s supernatural Kingdom, but it also enabled him to gain a deep understanding of these three prophetic streams and to value them. His tendency was to embrace them all and to “eat the meat and spit out the bones,” as he would often say to me in our early years together. But what was even more evident in Bill’s life was his deep love for the prophets and for the gift of prophecy. Bill literally transcribed every prophetic word he had ever received and took them with him wherever he went. He frequently poured over them, and although there were many prophecies spoken over him and our flock, he knew a lot of them by heart. He rarely made an important decision in his personal life without some sort of prophetic direction. Consequently, this has become

one of the core foundational principles of the way we lead our church and our movement to this day.

Herding Cats

Bill's love for diversity has inspired a lot of different kinds of people to follow us. Navigating the white waters of these different prophetic streams as they flow together into one mighty river of revelation can be difficult at best, and at times it is nearly impossible.

I started proactively pastoring our prophetic people about 25 years ago to help bring some sense of sanity and purpose to them. Like Bill, through the years I have learned to enjoy every prophetic stream and the variety of ways that God speaks to people in various epoch seasons, and through diverse cultural experiences and core values. I have come to understand that each of us views the Kingdom through a glass dimly, yet our collective perspectives are much more accurate because revelation is actually a community garden. It is cultivated, seeded, weeded and harvested by a prophetic community and not by an isolated island dweller. It is therefore imperative that prophets and prophetesses develop wholesome prophetic communities that inspire healthy young prophets and prophetic people to be discovered, developed and ultimately deployed into their divine destinies.

The challenge with leading a diverse group of prophetic people is that it is often like herding cats! Although prophets and prophetesses (contrary to popular opinion) do not fit into a personality profile, all of them tend to be extraordinarily sensitive and can easily feel misunderstood and/or rejected. Most of them are not used to having anyone speak into their lives or their ministries, therefore the slightest feedback is

often deemed “persecution.” To make matters worse, pastors tend to be afraid of people who are extraordinarily prophetically gifted. Pastors commonly feel as though they are not qualified to give such anointed people input into how their ministry is affecting the flock. But prophets and prophetesses desperately need leadership in their lives, and they need input from the other fivefold ministers if they are to stay healthy and nourish prophetic communities.

My Vision

My vision and goal in writing this book is to share with prophets and prophetesses some of the insights that I have learned over the years for how to develop a healthy prophetic community. I want to make it clear that this book is not the final word on prophets and prophetesses, nor is it the only perspective that anyone leading a prophetic community should embrace. I am simply one voice of experience crying out in the wilderness of revelation, trying to help make the crooked prophetic places straight so that Jesus can have a greater impact on our nations.

May God give us wisdom as we navigate the white water of this most exciting and powerful office of the prophet!



1

DISCOVERING YOUR DIVINE CALL

It all began on a winter day in the Trinity Alps in 1985. The snow covered the forest like a beautiful white sheet, while the sun glistened off every snowflake. I left our Union 76 Station about 6:30 p.m. and forged my way up our relatively steep driveway in our old, green International Scout. The Scout creaked and rattled its way up our dirt road, pushing snow as it rumbled to a stop at the front door of our humble chalet. Our three young children were waiting for me on the front deck, snowballs in hand, while I tromped my way through the deep snow in my rubber boots, defending myself from their onslaughts. The kids giggled and laughed as I quickly overtook them, dropping snowballs on each of their heads.

Then I grabbed the doorknob and retreated into the house, shouting, “Okay, that’s enough. . . . No more snowballs. . . .”

Come on, now, you'll get your mom upset if you throw one of those into the house!"

I heard snowballs hit the door as I slammed it behind me. The smell of food cooking in the kitchen filled my senses, while the heat from the woodstove warmed my frozen body.

"Hi, baby. How was your day?" I inquired as I made my way into the kitchen.

"Good, honey," she said, leaning over to give me a kiss, her hands full of plates.

"I'm going to jump into the bathtub while you finish dinner," I told her.

"I already filled the tub for you," she said with a smile.

"Thank you, baby," I remarked.

Frankly, I would have been surprised if she had not filled the bathtub, as this was our tradition. She cooked dinner while I soaked in the bathtub for an hour every night after work. I would read my Bible and unwind from a grueling day at the shop by relaxing in our old, claw-foot bathtub. The bathroom was the only room in the house that locked, so it became sort of a place of refuge when one of us needed a break from the kids. When dinner was ready, I would get out of the tub and we would eat together as a family. Then I would play with the kids, and Kathy would get a break from her long day with them.

I grabbed my Bible, its pages tattered from years of steam from the tub, and carefully submerged myself in the hot water. It felt like a thousand needles were poking my frozen feet and legs as my body temperature slowly crept back to normal. As the pain subsided, I read a couple familiar chapters from the Bible, then I closed my eyes, praying silently for the things that concerned my heart. There was nothing particularly special about this night; it was just like any other time in the tub. I read, I prayed, I contemplated, I meditated. . . . It was

never a particularly exciting or extraordinarily spiritual time. Personally, I was not prone to mystical experiences or angelic visitations; it was always just a peaceful experience of sensing God's goodness and enjoying a few quiet minutes to myself.

But suddenly, something astonishing happened. I heard a strange noise, and I opened my eyes just in time to see Jesus walk through the wall and stand in front of me! I sat up in the tub with a sense of awe surging through my being like electricity. I looked up into His face, and I could see the world in His eyes. Then, to my surprise, He began to speak to me.

“I have called you to be a prophet to the nations. You will speak before kings and queens. You will influence prime ministers and presidents. I will open doors for you to talk to mayors, governors, ambassadors and government officials all around the world. You will be a father to many nations, and you will guide many nations into prosperity, freedom and peace. I will put My words in your mouth, and the nations will know that there is a God in heaven who loves them, leads them and guides the affairs of men!”

The vision lasted for about half an hour as Jesus told me many other things that would happen in my life. I sat there in the tub, speechless, my mind swirling with thoughts, while my heart trembled with some sort of awesome fear, excitement and wonder all mixed up into one tumultuous emotion.

Finally, the Lord turned His back toward me to leave the room. Then He suddenly stopped, turned back around and pointed right at me. He said in a serious tone, “*History will tell us if you believe Me!*”

A moment later, He was gone.

I lay there for what seemed like an eternity, trying to process what had just happened to me. My mind was at war with itself, proposing a hundred unanswerable questions: *I'm a mechanic and a businessman; how can I be a prophet? I have*

no education, and I don't know a thing about governments; why would the leader of a country invite me to speak? If I were invited, what would I say?

Then all the “Who am I?” questions began to flood my mind: *Why would God send a service station owner from Weaverville to speak to kings and queens? It has only been two years since I had a serious nervous breakdown—not to mention the fact that I am terrified of flying—so how the heck would I even get to another country?*

I could not control my thoughts. Walls of questions and bars of insecurity imprisoned my soul. Finally, the silence was broken by Kathy calling out, “Honey, dinner is ready.”

I struggled to find the strength to pull myself out of the bathtub. As I dried off, I decided not to share my extraordinary encounter with anyone for a while. I was concerned that people would laugh at me behind my back or somehow think that I considered myself some kind of a big shot or something. Certainly none of my friends had ever thought of me as a prophet even to our church, much less to the nations.

I held off telling Kathy for a different reason. She is a very realistic, “get it done” kind of person. I feared that she would overwhelm me with practical questions. She would ask, “How would we make a living ministering to world leaders? What would we do with our business? How could we travel with small children? Could we do all this while living in Weaverville?”

I knew she would never want to move out of the mountains. I also did not have answers for any of my questions, much less the ones I knew she would start asking, so I decided to remain silent and try to work it out myself.

Looking back now, I can see that I was so entrenched in the vision that it was hard for me to be present anywhere. My emotions were all over the map; one minute I was excited that

God would call somebody like me to guide the nations, and the next minute I was terrified by the thought of standing in front of some ruler and having nothing to say.

In the Meantime

Days turned into months as I remained silent about my encounter with Jesus. I was eager for God to confirm His call on my life through someone else (hopefully someone our church leadership team respected), but no confirmation would come for more than two years. Time passed, and my excitement turned into concern as I began to question whether my visitation was real or just my wild imagination playing some cruel trick on me.

I spent hours reasoning with myself. I knew that I had never fantasized about being a prophet, nor did I ever have any secret dream of influencing kings. The truth is, I had been raised with a poverty mindset, so I pretty much believed that wealthy and/or powerful people were all crooks who could not be trusted. Hence, I reassured myself that I would never dream of being some big-shot prophet, traversing the planet to influence world leaders. After all, my greatest ambition was to own the best automotive repair shop in the world. Yet I could not shake the Lord's intense exhortation: "*History will tell us if you believe Me!*"

I decided to do what I could to steward the word I was given as best I knew how, yet I really was not sure where to start. After all, I did not know anyone who even knew a world leader, much less anyone who had prophesied over them. I decided that I would begin with reading every book I could find that had been written about prophets and prophecy. I poured over each page as if my life depended on it, highlighting every

major point and filling several notebooks with the insights I was gaining. At the same time, I read and reread every passage of Scripture having anything to do with prophets and prophecy. My heart was like a sponge, absorbing every bit of revelation I could squeeze out of the Scriptures.

Slowly but surely, something was changing in my spirit. It was as if the vision had somehow sown seeds in the garden of my heart that were growing into some kind of fruitful orchard. I could feel the heavenly vision wrapping its roots around my heart. I envisioned myself like Daniel, serving in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar, guiding the destiny of nations with heavenly visions and prophetic proclamations. There I was, a simple, uneducated man, standing before world leaders, sharing fresh revelation with them straight from the throne room of God. Excitement filled my soul as I imagined presidents stunned by my prophetic words, weeping as they tried to grasp the wisdom from another age. Little did I know that the process to the palace would be much more humbling than I could ever imagine. *Yikes!* But at least I was gaining a passion for something I had never cared about. That in itself was a miracle.

A Prophet in the House

Two long years had passed since I had lain in the bathtub and had the vision of Jesus talking to me about being a prophet to the nations. Then suddenly, I became a magnet that seemed to attract prophetic words everywhere I went. It was as if God had flipped a switch on in heaven that shone a spotlight on me. People began, both publicly and privately, to prophesy amazing words over me about touching nations and ministering to political leaders. During those days, prophets and

prophetic people prophesied Proverbs 18:16 over me a number of times: “A man’s gift makes room for him and brings him before great men.” Thankfully, my church leaders were often present when those words were spoken over me. In fact, several times the declarations came from them.

Jesus said, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household” (Matthew 13:57), yet something special was happening in the life of our fellowship. It was as though these prophetic words were building a highway in the hearts of the people I grew up with in the Lord. My leader, Bill Johnson, and several of our elders began to view me through the prophetic words instead of through my occupation. They began encouraging me, empowering me and reminding me of my prophetic call. I really needed their approval because I was so unsure of myself, and I went through tough seasons of doubt and faithlessness. But their faith pulled me through the low days and kept me progressing in my divine destiny. I do not know where I would be today if it were not for Kathy and the leaders God put in my life, who trusted me before I deserved it.

Twenty more years passed, and in 1998 we left the business world and moved down from the mountains of Weaverville to join the staff at Bethel Church in Redding, California. Bill Johnson had become the senior leader there two years earlier. I could not have fathomed what was coming next. We left a small church of a couple hundred people who knew everything about me (my failures, mistakes and sins), and moved to a church of more than a thousand people who knew nothing about our personal lives. Immediately, Bill introduced me to Bethel Church as “a prophet” to the Body of Christ. We were not big on titles at Bethel, which is still true, but for some reason Bill decided to present me in a very different light to Bethel than the way I had been known in our little country

church. And as if that were not enough, Bill had been sharing the testimonies of my prophetic exploits with the Bethel family before I arrived. (Thankfully, only the success stories.) Suddenly, I was thrust into a world of incredible favor that I found difficult to navigate.

My greatest challenge was learning how to work with the pastoral staff at Bethel Church. I had been in the business world all my life, and I had no formal theological training, nor had I ever been to college. In contrast, most of the twenty or so pastors at Bethel had graduated from seminary and had years of ministry experience. Not only that, but I am not sure any of them believed that I was a prophet or thought that I was even qualified to be a pastor on staff. So while the congregation embraced me with open arms, the staff was cautious about my call.

Then one Sunday morning, something finally shifted. The pastoral staff gathered in a small circle to pray before the service began. Suddenly the Lord gave me a prophetic word for Bill. He happened to be standing next to me, so I leaned over and whispered in his ear that I had a word for him that I wanted to share with him privately. But to my surprise, he asked me to share it in the presence of the entire pastoral staff.

I was overwhelmed with anxiety, but I tried hard to hide it. I gathered my thoughts and proclaimed, “The Lord will raise all the money this morning for the prayer chapel that we are building because of the divine favor He has placed on Bill. God says this offering will be a public sign of the favor Bill has gained in heaven because he chose to fear God rather than fear the people when hundreds of them rejected the outpouring of My Spirit on this house and left the church.”

The service began a few minutes later. I was overcome with anxiety again as the reality of the prophetic word settled over my soul. My mind was so flooded with negative scenarios

that I could hardly think. I lay facedown on the floor, with my head under my chair, during the entire service. After worship, Bill got up to speak. Instead of teaching, he decided to share his vision for the prayer chapel and take an offering for the building project.

I was horrified! All I could think of was the embarrassment of getting the prophetic word wrong in front of the entire staff. After all, the cost of the prayer chapel was \$237,000, and the largest offering in the history of our church had been about \$30,000. To make matters worse, Bethel was in the midst of a serious financial crisis, but Bill felt as though we were supposed to build the prayer chapel “by faith.”

When Bill finished sharing his vision for the chapel, he asked our people to pray and ask God if they should give, and if so, how much. Several minutes passed in intense silence as the people sought God in sincerity. Finally, Bill asked our congregation to come forward and put their offering on the steps of the stage. I could hear the footsteps of the people passing by me as I continued lying facedown on the floor. By now my shirt was soaked in sweat as fear gripped my soul.

When the traffic finally stopped, Bill asked our CPA, Steve, to get a calculator so that we could count the offering, while the people waited with expectation. Then he called up six of our staff members by name to help count the money. To my complete dismay, I was the sixth. I could not believe it. I crawled out on my hands and knees from underneath the chair and made my way to the stage, trembling like an alcoholic trying to detox. Money covered the front steps of the stage. I knelt down and scraped up a large pile of money and organized it by denomination, while separating the checks into another pile. I counted the hundreds and handed them to Steve, and then the fifties, and so on. The other five staff

members were doing the same thing. Steve was subtotaling the money as we handed it to him.

Finally, all of the money was turned in, and Bill asked for a total. The calculator spit out a couple feet of paper as it compiled the subtotals, then it came to a heartless stop. Time seemed to stand still while Steve reviewed the tape. I was sitting on the steps, hanging my head, with my eyes closed. I could hear Bill and Steve conversing enthusiastically, then Bill excitedly announced the total over the PA system: “The total is \$237,000.37!”

Of course, the people stood and cheered. I could hardly believe my ears. God had done it! He had raised all the money in one service. Honestly, as excited as I felt about building the prayer chapel, I was even more elated by the vindication of the prophetic declaration I had made.

For the next couple of years, this scene repeated itself over and over again. Many times, I would make a prophetic declaration to the staff and we would see it fulfilled. What I did not understand at the time was that God was promoting me among my peers. He was validating my call as a prophet to our leadership and to our church. When I look back at those days, I am humbled by God’s mercy. I realize He chose to establish my calling by His grace.

The Process

I cannot count the number of times people have talked to me about their leaders not acknowledging their office as a prophet or prophetess. Typically, they have had some sort of prophetic word or personal experience in which “God commissioned them” as a prophet. They take this as a license to operate in the office of a prophet in their local church or

ministry. What they fail to realize is that to have authority in any community, they must have the favor of God *and* the favor of man on their lives. That can be a process. Even Jesus Himself “kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

King David is a great example of this principle. God instructed Samuel the prophet to anoint a man king from the house of Jesse. The prophet went to Jesse’s house and commanded all Jesse’s sons to pass before him. When the last of seven sons stood before the prophet Samuel, he was bewildered, so he had a little talk with Jesse:

But Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen these.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are these all the children?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep.” Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.”

1 Samuel 16:10–11

Jesse sent for his youngest son, David. When David arrived at the house, Samuel could finally carry out the Lord’s instructions:

And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.

Verses 12–13

Not only was David anointed king, but the next verse tells us, “Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him” (verse 14).

If you did not know the biblical account, you probably would assume that David became king that day. But David did not become king for fourteen long years. In the meantime,

Israel lived with an unrighteous and insane king, Saul, until he finally died in battle. David had several opportunities to kill King Saul in those intervening years, but he refused to touch God's anointed. Although the Spirit of God had departed from Saul, he still remained anointed as king, a fact that David respected.

This in itself is a lesson to us all. It is not uncommon for God to anoint people to lead who are void of His Spirit. We will talk about this later in the book, but in the meantime, check out Romans 13:1–7, which starts out by saying, “Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God” (verse 1).

Finally, King Saul died in battle, and “the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah” (2 Samuel 2:4). Seven years later, “all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel” (2 Samuel 5:3).

Note here that David was anointed as king three different times—once by God (through Samuel) and twice by men. The important point to grasp from this is that God may have called you as a prophet, but until the leaders in your metron or sphere of authority recognize, invite and empower you to wield influence and authority, you are only a prophet to yourself. I talk more about the important concept of metrons and how we influence or are influenced by the spiritual atmosphere around us in my book *Spirit Wars: Winning the Invisible Battle against Sin and the Enemy* (Chosen, 2012).

A prophet is definitely a leader, but you have probably heard what the renowned leadership expert John Maxwell says: “He who thinks he leads, but has no followers, is only taking a walk.”

Favor with God, Not Man

What if you have favor with God, but you do not yet have favor with men? If you decide in that situation to take your “rightful place of authority,” you will probably find yourself like the Old Testament character Joseph, who was thrown into a pit long before he was promoted to the palace. That could be you in the pit if you try to step into a place of authority before others are ready to acknowledge your call.

Joseph was the eleventh of twelve brothers, yet his father favored him above his siblings because he was the son of his old age. You may already know his story. (If not, you can read it in more detail in Genesis chapters 37 and 39–41.) Joseph’s older brothers were extremely jealous of him because his father loved him more than the rest of them. One night Joseph had a dream from God in which he saw himself as a great leader ruling over his brothers. Instead of keeping the dream to himself and waiting for God to fulfill his call, he told his brothers about the dream. As you can imagine, this did not go over well with his older siblings. Then Joseph had another dream in which he was ruling over them and over his parents. Again, he told his family what he had dreamed. This further strained his relationship with his brothers, until they finally hated him so much that they threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery in Egypt.

As if that were not bad enough, Joseph rose to a trusted position in his Egyptian master’s household and was then falsely accused of rape by his master’s wife. At that point he was thrown into prison, with little hope of ever coming out again. But by divine providence and a series of miraculous circumstances, Joseph was called on to interpret a dream for Pharaoh and became ruler under Pharaoh of all Egypt.

It is an amazing story of divine promotion that we will talk about more in chapter 8, but personally, I think there were many paths Joseph could have taken to the palace. I do not believe he had to go through being sold into slavery and being put into prison to become the second-highest ruler of Egypt. I think God had determined Joseph's destination long before any of that. But Joseph's lack of wisdom and his arrogant attitude determined his rough pathway to promotion. In essence, he tried to take authority over his brothers before they were ready to acknowledge his right to lead.

We would do well to remember James 4:6: "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." You legitimately may be called to the office of a prophet or prophetess, but there is wisdom in waiting for God to grant you favor with men before demanding great authority and influence.

Favor with Man, Not God

On the other hand, certain people seem to have the uncanny ability to gain favor with others either without or long before they have favor with God. These people remind me of King David's son Absalom, who won the hearts of the people and usurped David's kingship, but all without the blessing of God. With an eye on position and power, Absalom did all he could to ingratiate himself with the people. Second Samuel 15:2–6 describes his political maneuvering:

Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way to the gate; and when any man had a suit to come to the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And he would say, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." Then Absalom would say to him,

“See, your claims are good and right, but no man listens to you on the part of the king.” Moreover, Absalom would say, “Oh that one would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has any suit or cause could come to me and I would give him justice.” And when a man came near to prostrate himself before him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. In this manner Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel.

Absalom won over the hearts of the people with flattery, selfish affection and false promises. This was the political spirit at work in the hearts of the people, a divisive spirit that splinters any unity in its path. When Absalom thought he had enough favor with the men of Israel to overthrow his father, he made his move for the throne, which brought calamity on both his father and himself:

Then a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.” David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise and let us flee, for otherwise none of us will escape from Absalom. Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”

Verses 13–14

You can read the rest of the story in 2 Samuel chapters 15–18, but the net result was that Absalom lost his life in his attempt to take up authority without the favor of God on his efforts.

Self-promotion has become a way of life in the twenty-first century. Social networking has helped elevate image above reputation in our culture. It has created a platform from which people try to market themselves as trusted experts, when in fact, they may be deceivers like Absalom. Self-promotion is

dangerous. I have watched the political spirit splinter and destroy countless congregations and devastate numerous families as some self-appointed prophet claws his or her way into prominence by stealing the hearts of people away from their leadership. The net result is never good.

Promotion and Protection

You may have heard the expression “greater levels, greater devils.” This typically implies that when you are promoted spiritually, you should expect more intense warfare in your life. Yet what we sometimes fail to realize is that when God promotes us, He also protects us.

Think about what happens when a person gets promoted to the office of the president of the United States. That person is immediately assigned Secret Service protection. We would never think of promoting someone to the office of the president without protecting him or her. The protection comes with the position.

The challenge to our protection comes when we promote ourselves. Many people promote themselves beyond their protection, then they wonder why their lives are in a constant state of turmoil. Absalom, whom we just talked about, is one example.

Let me be clear—I am not saying that if God promotes you to the office of a prophet and your leaders recognize His call and commission you, then everything in your life will always be rosy. Warfare will still come your way, no doubt about it. But your level of protection will go up along with your promotion. I do want to point out, however, that if you attempt to scratch your way to the top yourself, that can and will leave you uncovered and underprotected.

Eager Beavers

Another challenge I see facing the Church comes from what I call “eager beavers.” Many church leaders, feeling pressure to be in vogue with their peers, are eager beavers about promoting people too soon. A renewed awareness that apostles and prophets are such an important part of church government has caused many spiritual leaders to promote people unwisely and prematurely.

For example, I have watched leaders take the most prophetic person in their environment and commission that person as their “house prophet.” This is a mistake on many levels. First of all, the gift of prophecy and the office of a prophet are two completely separate things. We will discuss the difference in more detail in chapter 5, but suffice to say here that just because someone gives accurate prophecies, that in no way means that the person is called to the office of a prophet.

Prematurely installing someone in the office of a prophet or prophetess is not only unhealthy for the person being promoted; it can also be a devastating experience for the congregation involved. As we emphasized when we talked about Joseph’s story, between the promise and the palace there should always be a process that is natural and necessary. It is the process that prepares a person for promotion and develops in him or her the character it takes and the skills that are necessary to be successful in the palace, so to speak.

When we as leaders succumb to the pressure to stay spiritually current, we may promote people unwisely, before they have been through the process of preparation. That amounts to setting them up for failure. The spiritual pressure of a governmental office in the Body of Christ cannot be over-emphasized. Although the weight of the fivefold ministry of

apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is invisible, it is not intangible. I have watched many inexperienced and unprepared people—people who were genuinely called to a fivefold office but were commissioned prematurely—literally be destroyed by the very thing that they were destined to become. Many of them became disillusioned and left the ministry forever simply because their leaders did not use wisdom in preparing these precious people for their God-given purpose.

The apostle Paul emphasized this principle in his letter to Timothy, when he said in reference to leadership, “These men must also first be tested; then let them serve” (1 Timothy 3:10). He also warned Timothy, “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others” (1 Timothy 5:22). Although Paul’s subject in these passages is not the commissioning of prophets, the principles are still applicable. In fact, I would propose that these principles are even more important in their application to the fivefold ministry.

In the following chapters, we will look more closely at the process that is necessary for the preparation of those who are called to the office of a prophet or prophetess. Together, we will discover the culture that wise leaders must create to equip prophets and prophetesses for the challenges that lie ahead of them. We will cover many of the subjects that prophets and prophetesses need to master so that they can successfully wear this profound mantle and fulfill their divine mission. Ultimately, we want to see the office of the prophet and prophetess fully restored to the Church in a way that equips and prepares the saints to have a profound, positive impact on every realm of society.