

THE PROPHET IS A TRUTH TELLER One of the qualities that emerges from the prophet's role is zeal for people to hear and respond to the message. The message is internalized in the prophet to such an extent that he or she is unable to divorce themselves from its significance and meaning. As Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim describe it, "The prophet's intimate connection with God and His concerns will almost always cause him or her to experience the divine pathos, or the suffering of God as He experiences the world. They feel God's intense pain, His longing, and His anger, and because of this, they tend to be passionate and spiritual people." [68] This is why prophets are so consumed with holiness in the church. They can't help themselves. It is part and parcel with the message itself. They could never deliver the message well if they hadn't first received it and internalized it. Prophets force us to face the truth of how far removed we are from God. They call for change, not just for understanding or awareness. Because prophetic messages come from God, prophets tend to see everything in terms of black or white, right or wrong. There are few shades of gray to a prophetic person. And it is hard for prophets to just let things go after they've heard from the Lord. If their message is not received, it is more than merely a personal rejection; it is a spiritual offense. It's one thing for someone not to listen to another person, but not to listen to God is dangerous and has appalling consequences. Prophets value the message so much that they will tell the truth without fear of consequence. They are not prone to needing validation. This is not to say that they cannot have their feelings hurt or be embarrassed—they are human—but the message itself has greater importance than one's own sensitivities. The prophet's message is often to correct a problem—speaking into the gap between what is and what should be. As such, it is often a message that people do not want to hear. Prophets are rarely appreciated by their contemporaries. In fact, most of the true prophets in the Old Testament suffered greatly (James 5:10-11). They are often killed, exiled, or marginalized (see Matthew 14:1-5; 23:29-36; Hebrews 11). Even today, many prophetic leaders find themselves rejected by and isolated from the mainstream church.