

Prophetic Protocol

By Jamie Rohrbaugh

Knowing how to operate within prophetic protocol is essential for every Christian. Whether you are praying for your friend at your workplace or ministering in public in a prayer line, you need to operate within correct protocol. Protocol is about learning how to operate within the foundational boundaries—the dos, don'ts, whys, and how-tos—of interpersonal and prophetic ministry.

This article will address:

1. The purpose of protocol;
2. The purpose of prophecy;
3. How to draw people in, not put them off;
4. How to stay out of jail;
5. Who to minister to, who NOT to minister to, and how to minister; and
6. What does Esther have to do with protocol?

What Is Prophetic Protocol?

When we minister, there are things that we should and should not do. These boundaries and guides make up the body of prophetic protocol.

Why Does Protocol Exist?

Prophetic protocol is all about preserving the integrity of the prophetic ministry. It's all about preserving the integrity of the word that the Lord has given you, or that you *feel* the Lord has given you. If you don't abide by protocol, you may have the best word *ever*, but people won't listen to you because you're not credible. Protocol is all about keeping that credibility, and maintaining the dignity and trustworthiness of the words that are from the Lord.

Hebrews 1:9 tells us that Jesus loves righteousness and hates lawlessness. "Lawlessness" is operating outside the realms of where you're supposed to be. Unfortunately, this is a pitfall that many people get into. They get into operating outside the realms they are supposed to be in, because either they're not taught, or because they're embracing lawlessness on purpose.

I want to clarify something here: boundaries and guides are not to restrain you. Boundaries and guides are to empower you. They are to keep you healthy. They are to keep your ministry flowing. Your adherence to boundaries and guides allows the Holy Spirit to trust you. It allows the Lord to flow through you in a way that is honorable and pleasing to Him, and that is effective in reaching His people.

Ray Hughes has a teaching called "[The Warhorse](#)" that is wonderful. It discusses how wild mustangs may run around out in the West, but if they're out in the wild and the free and there's no food, no care, and no boundaries, you will never see those mustangs get old.

Christians can be like that. If you're out running in the wild and the free, you have no boundaries, there's nothing to keep you in place, and there's no one to take care of you, then you may not last very long. (As a matter of fact, I predict that you won't last very long in those conditions.) Therefore, prophetic protocol is a safeguard.

Remember that a huge spiritual principle is that **you can only have authority as much as you are under authority**. To have authority, you must be willing to abide by Scriptural protocol. You must also be willing to abide by the protocol that is put in place by the leadership of your church. If you will not, you will not be able to operate with authority because you're not under authority.

Five Practical Points

I'm going to give you a number of points about prophetic protocol. You may view this as a list of "dos and don'ts," and it is. There may be more "don'ts" than "dos," because the "dos" are pretty simple. Unfortunately, however, sometimes people don't like to keep their ministry simple. Sometimes they like to get weird, and that is what I want to protect you from. Keep it simple, sweetie, and let's do prophetic ministry the way the Lord says to do it.

1. Edifying, encouraging, and building up.

The first point, and possibly the most important point, is that prophetic ministry—speaking God's Word into other people, praying for other people, and so on—is always meant to edify, to encourage, and to build up.

First Corinthians 14:1-5 tells us this:

"Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification" (NKJV).

In this passage, Paul is clearly saying the purpose of prophecy—which is just hearing what God says and saying what God says—is to edify. Prophecy is to encourage. It is to build up. It is to comfort.

Therefore, one of the first things that you need to learn is this:

If you think you have a word from the Lord and it's not to edify, encourage, build up, or comfort, you don't have a word from the Lord.

Prophecy always brings hope. Prophecy always ministers the love and the Word of God to people. It always edifies. It always builds up. That is the function of prophecy in the church, according to the Scripture.

Therefore, making sure your words edify, encourage, comfort, and build up is your first safeguard in prophetic ministry. This safeguard will protect you from embarrassing yourself, from hurting other people, and from derailing your own ministry.

2. Be normal. Be approachable. Don't be weird.

I have seen people doing some really weird stuff in the name of ministry. There are people who will say, "Can I pray for you?" and they'll shake, groan, moan, lay hands, and just act weird. People can do some very weird things.

What's the problem with that? Well, the problem is that Jesus was not weird. Jesus may have done some odd things--like spitting in the ground and putting the mud in someone's eyes—but He wasn't weird in an off-putting way. Jesus drew men in with His words. The Jews said of Him, "Never has a man spoken like this Man" (John 7:46).

I don't know about you, but when I see someone doing something really weird in the name of prophetic ministry, I don't say, "Never has someone ministered like this person." Instead, I say, "Get away from me!" So I would encourage you: Be normal. Be approachable. You don't have to have a magic anything in order to prophesy. When you go to pray for someone, don't think, "Oh, I have to be wearing my favorite shirt," or "I have to carry a prayer shawl," or "I have to be wearing my magic underwear." Give me a break. Just pray for people. It's not about a formula. It IS about listening to the Lord and letting Him flow through you in a way that people will receive. So be normal.

3. Respect people's boundaries and personal space.

This is obvious and very practical, but unfortunately, many people mess this one up. Always remember that people have boundaries. People have personal space. You do not want to violate those boundaries. You don't want to violate their personal space.

Therefore, when you go to pray for someone, you should always ask, first, if you can pray for them. Get their permission to do so. If you're just praying (silently) for someone that's across the room, that's no big deal. You don't need to ask permission. However, when you go to pray for someone in person and they can hear you, you do.

Also, if you're going to touch someone, you need to ask them first for permission to touch them. So you would just say: "May I touch your shoulder?" Or "May I hold your hand?" I would recommend that you stick with shoulders and hands. Stay away from the no-zone, which of course is from the chest down to the groin. If someone needs prayer for their knee, it's ok to say, "May I touch your knee?" and you can bend down, or sit them down, and you can touch their knee. However, stay out of their personal space. Stay out of their private areas. If you're going to touch people, be sure you only touch people where they give permission to be touched. Touching them anywhere else is called assault. It's a crime. It's not ministry. (That's the tip for how to stay out of jail that I promised you at the beginning of this article!)

4. Avoid appearance of evil.

If there's any need to touch someone outside the shoulder or hand, then not only do you need to ask, but you need to make sure that men are only ministering to men and women are only ministering to women. Yes, there are people who will actually get in a prayer line in order to be touched by the opposite sex. Do not fall into that trap.

5. Only speak into someone's life when you have permission to do so.

If you do not have permission to speak into someone's life, don't! It's as simple as that. People are only willing to receive words from the Lord from other people that have permission to speak into their lives.

If you're ministering in a prayer line, if you're the person that is receiving people that are coming to you for prayer, you have permission. They're coming to you for prayer. So go ahead and pray for them. Minister to them. If the Lord gives you an encouraging word or prophetic word, speak that into their lives. That's ok. If you have a friend that tells you, "I need to hear from the Lord" and you feel that the Lord has given you a word for them, they've already given you permission and you have a relationship. So go ahead and speak to them. Tell them the word from the Lord, assuming that the Lord has told you to do so.

However, I want to caution you against thinking that you can go and speak to people in a prophetic way that have never given you permission to do so (people that you have no relationship with). It does not work. People will not listen. They will not honor the word. If you try to speak to them anyway, you actually make yourself look bad. You embarrass yourself, and you squander an opportunity to speak to them in the future. You dishonor the word from the Lord because they're going to discard it—all because you didn't have permission to speak to them.

Street Ministry

Now, when I say not to speak to people prophetically that you don't have permission to minister to, I am not talking about speaking encouraging words to people on the street that you don't know in order to reach them with the love of Jesus. That is a different thing. However, if the Lord leads you to speak to someone on the street or in the grocery store, go back to one of our first points: be normal. Be approachable. Don't be weird.

If you see someone that's limping and you feel led to pray for them, go up to them and say: "Wow, you look like you're in a lot of pain. Did you hurt yourself?" Or say, "Are you in pain?" and talk to them for a minute. Genuinely care about the person and show that you care. After they tell you about their injury, then say, "You know, I really believe that God doesn't want you to be in pain; would you allow me to pray for you? It would be a real honor." If they say yes, then you can proceed to pray for them, in a very normal, approachable way.

Often in prophetic circles, ministering on the street like that that is called "giving an encouraging word." The whole goal of ministering in public is just to love on people. If you go out and you minister in power but you have no love, you're still not going to be able to affect people. So remember the first and foremost goal: If you're speaking to someone out in public that you don't know, just love on them and that will open a door for you to speak an encouraging word. It doesn't even have to be religious-sounding. It doesn't have to sound spiritual. You can give someone an encouraging word just by saying, "You know you look so happy today. You have such a light on your face." Or to the server at your restaurant: "You're doing such a great job. I'm really glad I sat in your section today." Just speaking to people and loving on them can have a tremendous effect, and people can encounter the love of Jesus through you everywhere you go.

To Share Or Not To Share

What happens if you feel the Lord has given you a word for someone, but you don't have a relationship with them? Well, I would recommend that you just pray.

Don't be afraid to keep prophetic ministry private. Ministry does not always have to be public in order to be effective. I would say that 99.99% of the words the Lord will give you are for

praying, not for sharing. Of course, ministering to reach someone that you don't know in public with the love of Jesus (as we discussed above) via an encouraging word, a compliment, etc—is different. However, if you feel like you have a word for someone that you see often, or someone in your church setting—but you don't have a relationship with them—then I would really recommend that you just pray into that word. If you will pray into that word, the Lord will hear your prayer. He can bring forth His purposes in that person's life whether that person ever knows that you are praying for them or not.

As long as you are praying according to the will of the Lord, the Lord will hear you and work out His plans. His Word will never return to Him void.

Prophetic Does Not Equal Public

Just because ministry is prophetic does not mean it has to be public. People confuse those two things. A lot of people that operate deep in prophetic ministry are not public people. They prefer to be hidden. They operate in the secret place in their prayer closet, and may not ever go out. You may not ever know how deep they run.

However, these people have authority in Heaven. One of my favorite things to remind myself of is: "I don't need people to clap when I do something, but I do need Heaven to move." I would encourage you to adopt that as your motto too. You don't need people to clap. You don't need people to recognize you. What you do need is results. You need Heaven to move when you do something.

I would encourage you to keep that in mind when you have a word from the Lord. Ponder carefully: does it really need to be shared? Or do you need to get on your face awhile and pray it in? Most of the time, the answer is that you need to get on your face awhile and pray it in.

Prophetic protocol is a wide subject, but it is all about your safety and preserving the integrity of the ministry. Whenever you are working for the king or with the king—in this case, the King of Kings, Jesus Christ—there is always a protocol. There's always an established way to do things that keeps people safe.

Queen Esther operated in protocol even when she risked her life to go to King Artaxerxes. She had to touch the scepter in order to have her life spared. There's always a protocol when we're working with the King. That protocol is meant for your good, for your safety, for your blessing, and for the blessing of other people.