

And the thing that usually happens to these misguided souls with all the rough edges is that somebody tells them, "Hey! I know what you are, **you're a PROPHET!**" And then they say to themselves, "Wow! That's why people are so down on me all the time! Why that's just the way they treated Elijah and Jeremiah and... and even **Jesus!!!** Hey! I'm just like Jesus!" And then they start getting "words from the Lord" and all the rest that comes along with being a "prophet." The saddest thing about all this is whenever someone is brash, obnoxious, or loud, **we label him a "prophet."**

But you know, deep down inside, most of them really do want to please God, but now they're so insulated from criticism and protected from rebuke (because they think they're a rejected "prophet") that no one can help or reach them. And unless God intervenes in their lives, they cannot truly be used in any long-term way because of their unteachable, uncorrectable spirit.

What Is A Prophet?

Now with all this talk about misguided, young zealots going around blasting people with truth minus love, I don't want to give the impression that God has not called certain people to fulfill the ministry of a prophet. There are many references in the book of Acts concerning people anointed by God to preach with prophetic urgency. (Acts 2:16, 3:22, 8:28,30, 13:20, 21:10-11, 28:25) These men were called "prophets" by the writer of Acts. And Paul, in his teaching about the Body of Christ, talks about the different offices and callings in the body to help build up, strengthen, and establish the Church. (1 Cor. 12:27-30; Rom. 12:4-16; Eph. 4:11-16)

First of all, he would be a **CHRISTIAN**—he would be **like Jesus**. Yes, he would hate sin like Jesus, but more importantly, he would love sinners like Jesus! He would not be arrogant, but he would be a broken man who was softened by many nights alone in prayer. He would be loving, kind, and gentle, always seeking to get the truth across in the most direct way, and yet never offending anyone if he could help it.

One of the main problems for them is that most of what they see as wrong, really **IS** wrong! But they have little love or grace to share the truth with—they just aim their big cannons and BOOM! They blow their hearers to bits.

The Lesson Comes Home

Like I said before, this is partly a confession... and I'm sincerely sorry if I ever blew you to bits with my lack of love. I really meant well, but I was hindered by the "prophet syndrome"—the idea that my rough edges were a part of my calling from God. I'm not trying to say that what I wrote or preached in the past was wrong. It's just that some of it could have been said a little differently—and with a lot more grace.

Even so, if the Lord says to speak out on an issue, I'll be glad and ready to do it—but I must do it as a servant, **not** as a prophet. I must "*speak the truth in love*" (Eph. 4:15), and always make

The prophet, above all, would be a man of God. He would seek to display all the qualities of love found in 1 Corinthians 13. He would not be easily provoked or moody or unduly harsh—but patient, merciful, and slow to anger. He would not seek to be a prophet, nor glory in that position, but just like Gideon, Jeremiah, or Moses, he would ask God to make sure he was the man of His choice **before** he would speak out against sin and hypocrisy. (Judges 6:36-40; Jer. 1:6; Ex. 3:11-12)

Lastly, he would be a broken man, well acquainted with grief and tears. He would have a broken heart over the sin in the world and the worldliness in the Church. Before Jesus made a scourge of cords to whip the moneychangers (when He turned over the merchandise tables in the temple), He first wept and prayed over the straying city of Jerusalem before He entered her gates. (Luke 19:41-46) The prophet, like his Master Jesus, would weep before he whipped, pray before he spoke out, and walk in dread of being in the wrong spirit. **For unlike James and John, he would know what spirit he was of...**

sure that my words are "*seasoned with grace*" (Col. 4:6). **That is the Christian way. That is Jesus' way!**

Hallelujah for the freedom that comes with repentance! Oh, how He makes us new, forgiving us and changing us into His glorious image!

Keith Green and his wife Melody gave their hearts to Jesus in 1975, and were "sold out" for the Lord from the very start. Last Days Ministries was born as they began reaching out to others with the Gospel. On July 28, 1982, Keith and two of his children were in an airplane crash and went to be with Jesus. Though still one of America's best-selling Christian musicians, Keith considered himself first and foremost a servant of Jesus.

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KEITH GREEN



The Man Behind The Message

by Keith Green

"And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them and said, 'You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'"
—Luke 9:54-55

James and John got a sharp rebuke from the Lord because they were of a "different spirit" than the one Jesus was of. He came to love and forgive, but they were all ready to destroy those who opposed them. They forgot Jesus' injunction to "love their enemies"—they were ready to kill theirs! Oh what a lesson there

is here for those of us who are prone to spiritualize our own bitterness and anger. James and John justified their desires by saying they wanted to do "just as Elijah did." He was a prophet of God, who "called down fire from heaven" on his enemies. (II Kings 1:10-12) They, too, wanted to be "fiery prophets."

This article is sort of a confession. You see, I've been accused in the past of being a "prophet." I must admit it has kind of a nice ring to it—the word **prophet**—but I think it causes a lot more trouble than it's worth. I have struggled with this problem for around six years, and that's quite a long time, considering that I've only been a Christian for about seven.

Early Christian Training

It all started in a small Bible school that my wife, Melody, and I went to during our first year as believers. One of the teachers had recently been to a seminar where the speaker had gone through all the aspects of each of the gifts and callings on men and women of God. He had talked about teachers, administrators, and so on.

The teacher in our little class that day was very excited about sharing the aspects and characteristics of a prophet to the class. He started reading his notes from the seminar he had been to, and he read things like, "Prophets are very moody, they are often very hard to get along with, they see things in black and white and might seem to lack compassion. They are often considered rude and brash, but inside they mean very well, and only want to share the truth—but they don't seem to mind if they step on people's toes when they do it." While our teacher was reading from these notes, I'm sure he didn't notice the smile spreading across my face from ear to ear. Why, everything he was reading just fit me to a tee! I just couldn't believe my ears... at last, I had found my calling!

To top all this off, when our teacher was through reading, he turned to the class, pointed his finger at me and said, "My friends, we have a prophet in our midst!" **Well, that was it—I was hooked.** That's all I needed to hear! It took the Lord about another five years to completely deflate my head from the delusions that innocent and well-meaning Bible teacher helped to

promote in my life. A lot of what he shared was true, but it certainly needed a good deal of warning balance to go with it. That is what I hope to share in this article.

The Main Need For This Article

Because we at Last Days have a nationally-known ministry, many people show up at our door from all over the country and want to see firsthand what's going on. From time to time though, somebody shows up with "a word from the Lord." (I'm not trying to be sarcastic. We've had some pretty interesting characters show up at the door.)

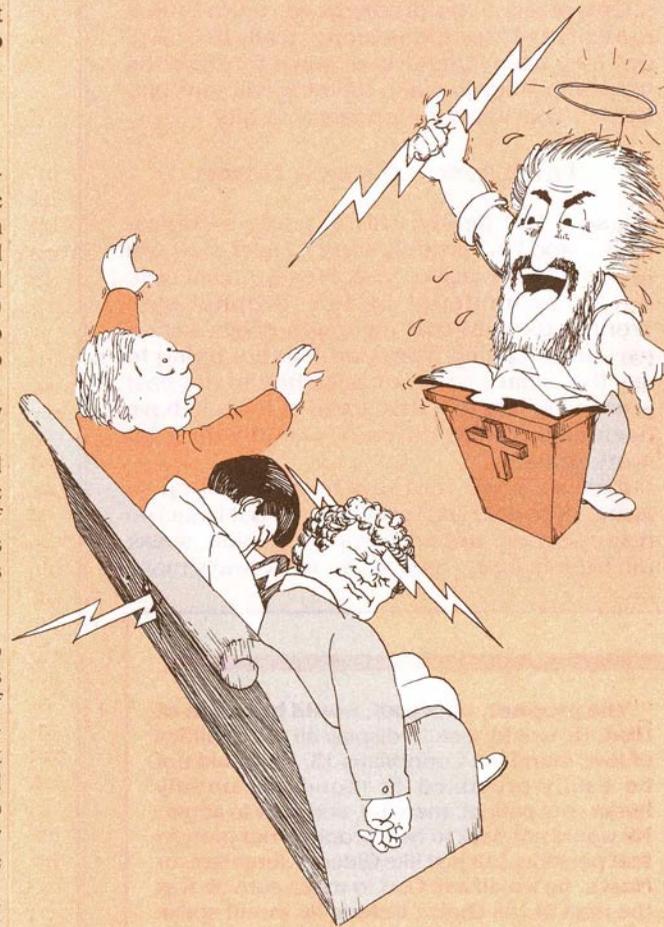
We had one guy show up and when we invited him to eat a meal with us, he said that God had told him not to eat. We asked him, "How long?" He said he didn't know, but he wasn't supposed to eat. He told a sad story of how everybody had rejected him—his parents, his church, and every other church he had gone to. When we asked him what God had told him to share, he opened the Bible and started reading from Revelation. After awhile, one of our elders counseled him to go back home and get his relationships right with his parents and his pastor. This he refused to do, and he went on his way refusing to eat, and refusing to listen because, "God had told him..."

Another time, we had a guy with long robes show up who said God told him to come and tell all the ministries around here that the Garden of Eden was in the state of Georgia! He shared with such urgency, with such sincerity—but no matter what we said to him, we couldn't sway him from his "divine commission." Because "God had told him..." He had no one to counsel him, no one to listen to, no one to confirm that, yes, God had truly spoken to him. He was on his own, and he was right—**the only one right!**

These are some extreme examples of something I think is a very common problem in the church today—young people (usually men) who believe that God has raised them up to tell people what is wrong with their ministry or their lives, or both! These people are usually hurt, independent, talkative, stubborn, unteachable, and unyielding. I know, because I have been one of them!

What The Lord Has Recently Shown Me

The above subtitle might even sound pretentious, but God does speak to His people—not just "special" ones, like in the Old Testament—but to **all** His people. He speaks to them in many ways—through the Holy Spirit who lives in them, through men and women of God in their church and around them, but mainly through the



Word of God, the Bible. Whenever the Holy Spirit gives us peace (or lack of peace) about a certain thing we are doing or want to do, or whenever our pastor or a Christian friend gives us advice or counsel about a particular problem—it will **always** line up with the Word of God, or it **isn't** from Him. For...

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." —II Tim. 3:16-17

As I was studying His precious Word over the past year, it suddenly dawned on me that my whole view of myself and my calling was all backwards. So many people had

told me that I was a "prophet" over the years that I had believed "they must be right." I saw myself as a spokesman to my generation in the church—not **the** spokesman, but one of a number, chosen by God to be used to correct and exhort believers to obey God and win this world for Jesus. It's not that I no longer believe I'm called to do that, it's just that now I see that **every** believer is called to do that—to **call all Christians everywhere to obey God and win the world for Christ!**

The main thing that God has shown me through it all is this: **I'm not called to be a prophet, I'm called to be a CHRISTIAN—a servant of the living God!** That is the HIGHEST calling that anyone can realize. And the most beautiful thing has happened in my heart. My whole goal in life has completely changed—the **only** thing that I want to achieve, is to have the Lord tell me when I stand before Him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" Not, "Well done, thou good and faithful **prophet**," or pastor, or writer, or singer, or anything else. To be a Christian, to live up to that wonderful word—that is my **ONLY** goal.

After all, Paul starts out that meaty book of Romans with these words: *"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle."* Not "... an apostle of Jesus Christ, called to be a servant." No, Paul had his priorities straight—he knew what went **first!**

The Prophet Syndrome

I'm sure you know someone in your fellowship who has all the earmarks of being a potential "prophet." They don't beat around the bush, but they say exactly what's on their mind. They aren't very popular, but they don't care because they believe that they're "being persecuted for righteousness' sake." They're always finding fault with almost everything and rarely have a kind word to say. They say to be "kind" would be phoney for them. They know that the fruit of the Holy Spirit includes such things as kindness, gentleness, self-control, and long-suffering, but they say that most people misinterpret those Scriptures, "and besides, there's a lot more in the Bible about zeal and judgment and the wrath of God, etc...."