

Go Deeper . . .

Use these questions for further study individually or in a small group

The Way of the Prophet (Godly Anguish)

Pastor Adam described prophets as “truth-tellers” who speak truth from God’s perspective when God’s people are in states of denial and disobedience.

- What are some biblical examples of prophets functioning in this way?
- Why do churches need prophetic voices?
- Why do prophetic truth-telling voices often get pushed to the fringes and silenced by those who favor the status quo?
- Have you ignored or silenced prophetic voices when they have addressed topics or truths which make you uncomfortable? How can you take a step away from denial and toward openness to what God is saying through these challenging voices?

Prophets hold holy-disgust or righteous-anger alongside of deep love for the people they challenge and speak to. While both cynics and prophets see what is broken in a church or community, cynics tend toward a posture of contempt and distance whereas prophets take a posture of love and drawing near.

- Consider your own frustrations with the Church and the world.
 - What are they?
- When you acknowledge or give voice to injustices or other wrongs have your attitude and actions been marked more by irritation or by heartache? Have your words and deeds been righteous or self-righteous?

Prophetic Practices:

1. Revisit our sermon series on Amos or on Habakkuk. Consider how these biblical prophets serve as models for dealing with frustration and injustice. Allow the words of God through these prophets to speak truth and challenge into your life.
2. The Discipline of Truth Telling - practice speaking in ways which do not exaggerate, minimize, deny, rationalize, or manage the truth.
 - A. Practice one of the following for a week: Not gossiping; Not exaggerating; Not rationalizing; Not dissembling
 - B. Address areas of hurt or injustice directly, in person, with love and gentleness but without minimizing
3. Engage in biblical justice. Go to covchurch.org/mercy-justice to learn more about ways you can live as a prophetic witness of God’s Kingdom.

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The Way of the Sage (Wisdom)

What is the difference between knowledge/information and wisdom?

How does biblical wisdom differ from the wisdom of the world?

Where do you see worldly wisdom marketed or deployed in Christian contexts?

In times of hurt, confusion, and despair have you ever received advice or counsel that was unhelpful or even painful? Describe the experience. What do you wish would have happened differently?

Have you ever received counsel from someone truly marked by wisdom? Describe what it was like and how it differed from other people.

Wisdom Practices:

1. Read 1 chapter of Proverbs each day for 1 month.
2. Read the book of Ecclesiastes each week for 4 weeks. Read 2 chapters a day for 6 days and on the 7th day journal your reflections from the book. Repeat this practice 3 more times. Pay attention to what themes emerge. At the end of 4 weeks meet with a pastor or mentor to share and pray together.
3. Identify a mentor who can speak Godly wisdom into your life.
4. With a mentor, counselor, or pastor, begin confronting areas of denial and avoidance in your life.

The Way of the Poet (Lament)

Have you ever experienced a worship service that made significant space for the practice of lament? What was it like?

Why is it important to incorporate lament as part of worship?

Read a Psalm of Lament (see below). What is your response to the language used or to the audacity and raw emotion of these prayers?

Is God offended by our strong emotions? Does God welcome them?

Why is it important to express our anger, hurt, and disillusionment in the context of worship?

Practices of Lament:

1. Read the book of Lamentations out loud as a prayer. Allow the words of scripture to unlock your emotions and give voice to your sorrow and sadness.
2. Pray through a Psalm of lament (e.g. Ps 10, 13, 22, 40, 43).
3. Write your own psalm of lament to God.
4. Practice the spiritual disciplines of solitude and silence.
5. Meet with a pastor or counselor who is able to listen in ways that make space for your hurt without having to “fix” anything.

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