

Triperspectivalism:

Drilling Down

Pastor David Fairchild

Nov 22, 2010

After speaking at the Soma 201 training this last week I thought I'd post up some notes with hopes that it will help leadership teams applying TriP.

The Danger of Overgeneralizing

Using TriP as a kind of quick profiling of personalities is not really helpful or healthy. The danger in any DISC or Meyers Brigg type of assessment is that it leaves out what can not be discerned on paper (e.g., human interaction through relationships in community, the work of discernment by way of the Holy Spirit, past performance, passions and aspirations). Making statements like, "oh, this person's a priest, so they can't..." or "they're a king and we really need a..." is going to slow you down in the long run because (as we'll see below) there are variances to consider within their perspective that may allow them to be a great fit for a role you wouldn't have initially considered.

Also, I've heard of churches use the TriP language to all but shun one of the perspectives because they thought they knew what "type" of person was needed. This betrays the point of TriP, which is to see each perspective relying upon and informing the others. God is the only one who is omniperspectival. We need each perspective to help us develop in our own area of weakness. Additionally, as you mature you move closer to the center of the PPK triangle since you're growing in Christlikeness by listening and applying truth from other perspectives.

Ok, enough of the warning label.

Drilling Down PPK

There are different kinds of prophets, priests and kings based on their secondary perspective. In fact, their secondary perspective is sort of like their delivery method. In other words, you might be a priest and enjoy counseling, but your secondary is king. So you enjoy working with people that need pastoral care by applying wisdom to their particular situation like finances or work related counsel. This is effortless and easy for a kingly priest, but not so for a priestly priest. Let's break it down.

PROPHETS

Prophetic Prophet

Prophetic prophets are usually concerned about the precise clarity of the word preached. They are more concerned that what they're preaching is true than whether or not it's practical or inwardly transforming. Not that these aren't concerns for them, it's just not what they are most concerned with. Think of John Piper or John MacArthur. These types of prophets are really, really needed and helpful to ensure we don't pragmatically slide or emotionally decide what is true and accurate. Accuracy, doctrinal soundness and precept upon precept are words a prophetic prophet is comfortable using. Of course, the tendency is to slip into a kind of intellectualizing of the Gospel if not shaped and informed by other perspectives.

Priestly Prophets

Priestly prophets connect existentially with their hearers. They are able to take truth and effectively move the emotions and affections of others through their communication. Tim Keller is an excellent example of a priestly prophet that is gifted in communicating to the heart. This doesn't mean they aren't still normatively oriented, but the vehicle they use to communicate truth is existentially oriented. We need priestly prophets in our church. They help us to grasp the feel of the passage and move us to worship. In fact, their goal in preaching is heartfelt worship over intellectual stimulation or practical application. Heart, affections, adoration, and feeling the presence of God are words and ideas priestly prophets are comfortable with.

Kingly Prophets

Kingly prophets are excellent at vision casting and communicating strategy. They motivate by showing what God is like and what He wants His people to do. They are greatly concerned with the application of the word in the life of a Christian and community. They labor to make sure you see how this passage is worked out and applied. In fact, they'll often think that unless the truth is proven by their life, no matter how much they claim to emotionally connect or intellectually understand, they haven't yet grasped it. Examples, figures and facts are regularly used by kingly prophets. In my sphere of relationships, Mark Driscoll and Jeff Vanderstelt are excellent kingly prophets. Mark has tremendous gifts at vision casting and Jeff's use of a white-board is legendary.

PRIESTS

Prophetic Priests

It's easy to assume that priests are "nice guys" that help clean up the mess prophets make. However, there are different kinds of priests and when building a leadership team it's important not to jump to conclusions about their ability to contribute to a specific need.

A prophet priest is someone that primarily processes through an existential grid yet is able to effectively communicate and bring the word to bear upon any given situation. This type of priest may actually have excellent communication skills and is able to use them to see grace renewal taking place. They use their secondary perspective to deliver their primary desire; a heart transformed by grace. In counseling, they may tend to be more monological than a priestly priest. For those who have been through gooey, "how did that make you feel when mommy spanked you?" kind of counseling, this is an excellent person to bring truth and see it believed in a counseling context. Think of Jay Adam's as a prophetic priest. His primary concern for counsel and change is Christians thinking right thoughts. It's no coincidence he wrote a book entitled *A Theology of Counseling*. If you're ensuring that gospel-shepherding is happening in your church you probably want to discern if you're looking for a prophetic communicator, a structural catalyzer or a gospel-counselor. If not, you might call someone to lead in a role they are not really suited for or competent in. Just being a priestly type isn't sufficient. You have to ask yourself, "what kind of priest are they?"

Priestly Priest

A priestly priest is typically a great listener and someone who is quite concerned with leading others to feel right feelings in order to experience gospel-transformation. They are wonderful shepherds for those who have been "truthed" to death by their last church. They will usually have their finger on the pulse of the broken hearted in the church and will want to see change happen at a deep, deep relational level by encourage we listen more than speak. The idea of systems and structures are probably not going to be welcomed without a clear understanding of how the structure will serve to love the hurting. If you're looking for someone to develop, communicate, and lead the church to engage in pastoral care, a priestly priest will need to be helped to accomplish this end. However, if you're looking for someone to be a lead shepherd for gospel-counseling, they might be a perfect fit. They are a vital part of any church and should be cherished. We need priestly priests in our midst and shouldn't be merely accepted but seen as vital to our health. Without them, our people may feel burned out and misunderstood. Priestly priests are much

more concerned with individuals and are usually one-on-one, high-touch leaders. Helping priestly priests connect structure and truth-telling to their counseling will allow them to flourish. They will help us slow down, pray, listen and move slowly so that people are feeling loved and experiencing grace. Think of Dan Allender as a priestly priest. *The Wounded Heart* is a great book to grasp how a priestly priest thinks and counsels.

Kingly Priests

Kingly priests are not only concerned with shepherding the flock, they are able to effectively use structure and organization to accomplish their primary concern. They ensure the priestly function is flourishing in the church by organizing, managing and coaching other priests. They are also excellent when helping a saint apply the gospel to a particular situation. They are often concerned that you live out the gospel in your actions. In fact, they will usually counsel someone to live out their convictions until their heart catches up. They will help you walk out the implications of being changed by grace. Grace isn't merely an abstract concept or inward feeling to them. Ed Welch and Paul Tripp are great kingly priests. Where a prophetic priest will help those who haven't been given much truth and priestly priests will help those abused by so-called truth, a kingly priest will help someone who hasn't been shown how the gospel is lived out in practice.

KINGS

Prophetic Kings

Prophetic kings are greatly concerned that the vision and cause are clearly communicated and understood. They won't be content with structure unless it is connected to a greater value or truth. They are able to quickly problem solve issues of vision and values and can bring concrete clarity as they help to work out how this truth should "look" within the community. Prophetic kings are good communicators that can easily speak and teach about structure and help leaders think through bottlenecks at an organizational level. They enjoy casting vision and will typically thrive in an environment where they are asked to give a reason for why they do what they do and why others should follow. However, prophetic kings are not managers and may not be detailed. If you're looking for someone to implement systems, a kingly king not prophetic king, will get you there. A prophetic king will help to initiate a project and then want to move on or find others to lead the needed components of that structure and manage it. A prophetic king will essentially tell you how a thing should work and what you should do to get it done. We need prophetic kings, especially when we're in the process of change or attempting to launch a new initiative.

Priestly Kings

A priestly king is concerned with how the church is coming together and being organized for renewal and change. They'll want to ensure the community clearly understands their function in a priestly way and that the church is organized to make space for gospel-shepherding. A priestly king won't find the creation of structure enjoyable unless they connect it with loving people. They are highly relational kings and will help a church thrive that is needing to change in a way that isn't disruptive. A prophetic king will tend to forget the feelings of others during change and structure, a kingly king might be pragmatic when helping a church change, but a priestly king will regularly push-back when they feel the structure won't accomplish grace-renewal during change. This is needed since prophetic prophets tend to become convinced about a truth and then ask a king to create structure to accomplish their goal without properly caring for the people. We need priestly kings that will help our church to grow in loving service.

Kingly Kings

A kingly king will be concerned with the planning and execution of a church by laboring as an organizer, manager or coach. They thrive in an environment where they can be part of creating and leading structure. To them, if a church isn't well organized, the vision it communicates and loving environment it creates is significantly hindered. This type of king is excellent at execution but will need to continually be brought

back to why we're doing what we do and what we're trying to disciple in our people. Kingly kings are necessary to the church because they won't let us get away with theorizing alone. They want will work towards concrete action and are naturally adept in probing to make sure we do what we say. They make great coaches because they help us to put our commitments to actionable steps. They also are great at gathering the necessary detail and facts before we pull the trigger on our initiatives. A church needing a theology of structure or a visioneering king may become frustrated if they expect this from a kingly king. Kingly kings may come across as either too practical or pragmatic, but if led well by others they can thrive as part of a team.

As you can see, it's important that you assess someone appropriately before jumping to conclusions about where a person will fit within a leadership team. Also, I wouldn't suggest you wait to move forward with a team until you find the perfect fit or exact kind of PPK your'e looking for. Instead, we should bless God with what He's providentially given and simply be aware of the strengths and weaknesses as we move forward. Realizing this, we can enjoy the gifts and perspectives of one another and also the limitations so we don't grow frustrated.

Like - Dislike